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*Poor In* ON *The*  
*Scotland.*

THE MANAGEMENT

OF

THE POOR IN SCOTLAND,

AND ITS EFFECTS ON

THE HEALTH OF THE GREAT TOWNS.

BY

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IN ORDINARY TO HER MAJESTY FOR SCOTLAND.

"The poor shall never cease out of the land."—DEUT. xv. 11.

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."—ROM. xii. 21.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD & SONS, EDINBURGH;  
AND THOMAS CADELL, LONDON.

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## PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE reception with which the First Edition of this Pamphlet has been honoured by the public, and the steps which have been lately taken in Edinburgh to procure a searching Inquiry into the Management of the Poor in Scotland, with a view to its improvement, are enough to shew that one anticipation, at least, which it contained, was well-founded,—viz. that no want of disposition would be found, in a large portion of the inhabitants of Scotland, to attend carefully to the proposals I have made on this subject,—if it be ascertained that where the system which I have recommended is in force, the condition of the lower orders of society is really better than with us.

In attempting to demonstrate the fallacy of the speculative opinion which, as I believe, has thwarted or prevented such improvements as the sense of duty and feelings of humanity would otherwise have introduced before this time into Scotland, I have been fully aware of the truth and justice of the observation of one of my most respected instructors in science,—that, “when Reason and Philosophy have erred, it is by themselves alone that the error can be corrected.” But I am also sensible, that the argument which I have maintained may be placed on a higher ground, and may command the attention of a much larger portion of the community than can take any interest in a merely scientific discussion.

In order that the people of Scotland should see the wisdom and justice of submitting their system of Management of the Poor to a complete revision, with a view to improving it by the experience of other nations, it is only necessary to satisfy them, that in their

own practice in this particular,—in consequence, as I believe, of misapprehensions which have misled many able and benevolent men,—a religious duty has hitherto been imperfectly performed.

That the relief of the poor is a religious duty distinctly enjoined in the Holy Scriptures, no one can doubt who attends to the context of the memorable prophetic warning in the Book of Deuteronomy; amply fulfilled in the history of every nation which has since existed, that “the poor shall never cease out of the land.” It is not said, as an inference from this assertion, “Therefore thou shalt teach the poor, or force the poor, to *provide for themselves* ;” but it is said expressly, *therefore thou shalt provide for them*. “Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to the needy in thy land.” “*Thou shalt surely give him*, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him.” “Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart,”—“and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee.” And I believe it may be safely affirmed, that every other allusion to the duty of Charity in the Scriptures, is strictly in accordance with this primary declaration of the will of Almighty God.

This being the clear and distinct intimation of our duty, sanctioning and confirming the law which was written from the beginning on the hearts of men, it is admitted to be within the province of human Reason, to determine in what manner this assistance to the poor may be given with the most effectual and permanent benefit.

It has been, in effect, very generally maintained of late years in this country, that the injunction of Scripture ought not to be literally or directly obeyed; that, when the poor know that there is a fixed and uniform provision for them, on which, when overtaken by misfortune, they can confidently rely, they become reckless and improvident,—that population advances with excessive rapidity,—and the number of objects of charity is quickly multiplied; but that, by giving the poor a complete religious and moral education, and at the same time abstaining, as much as possible, from giving them any direct assistance (except in the case of sickness), we have a reasonable prospect of so enlightening their minds, and so guiding their conduct, as to teach

*them* to make provision for all misfortunes which may befall them. It is plain, that to suppose the poor capable of providing themselves with *every thing* that they may require, is to suppose that the poor shall cease out of the land; but it has been very generally believed, that they ought to be capable of providing themselves with every thing except religious and moral instruction, and assistance in sickness; and even that for these benefits they ought to be able to pay partially.

If these assertions were to be held as established, it might very fairly be maintained, that in this manner our duty to our poor brethren would be both most efficiently, and (what is, no doubt, with many the chief recommendation of the system) most cheaply performed.

But it is quite obvious, that, in order to release the people of this or any other Christian country from the obligation so precisely and emphatically laid down in Scripture, of clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, it is necessary that those assertions should not only be made, but be distinctly *proved*, in the only way in which such an assertion can be proved, viz. by experience; and that the burden of proof rests on those who contend for this interpretation (certainly different from the direct and literal meaning) of those memorable words of Scripture.

Now the object of this Essay is to shew, not only that these things are not proved, but that the very reverse of them is found, by experience, to be the truth; that in a country advanced in civilization, population makes the most rapid progress where least is done for the poor; that its tendency (inherent in human nature) to outstrip the means of subsistence, is most effectually restrained where a fixed and uniform provision, securing them against destitution and degradation, is known to exist; and that no religious or moral education which can be given them, without the aid of such provision against destitution and misery, is effectual in teaching them prudence, or restraining their tendency to excessive increase.\*

\* The tendency to increase in a greater ratio than the means of subsistence, is not peculiar to the human race, but extends to all other animals, and is obviously the final cause of the introduction into every division of the animal kingdom of a certain number of carnivorous genera.† In the case of Man, the correction of this evil is left to his own judgment and foresight; but it

† See Roget's Bridgewater Treatise, vol. i.

Unless the statements and reasonings on which these conclusions are rested, are shewn to be fallacious, I apprehend that the obligation imposed on us by the words of Holy Writ must remain clearly imperative, and that we shall hazard much if we attempt to gainsay or evade it. The only practical question which is really open to us, is merely, how the *direct* provision which we are enjoined to make, *from our own means*, for the relief of poverty and suffering, may be most prudently and effectually administered.

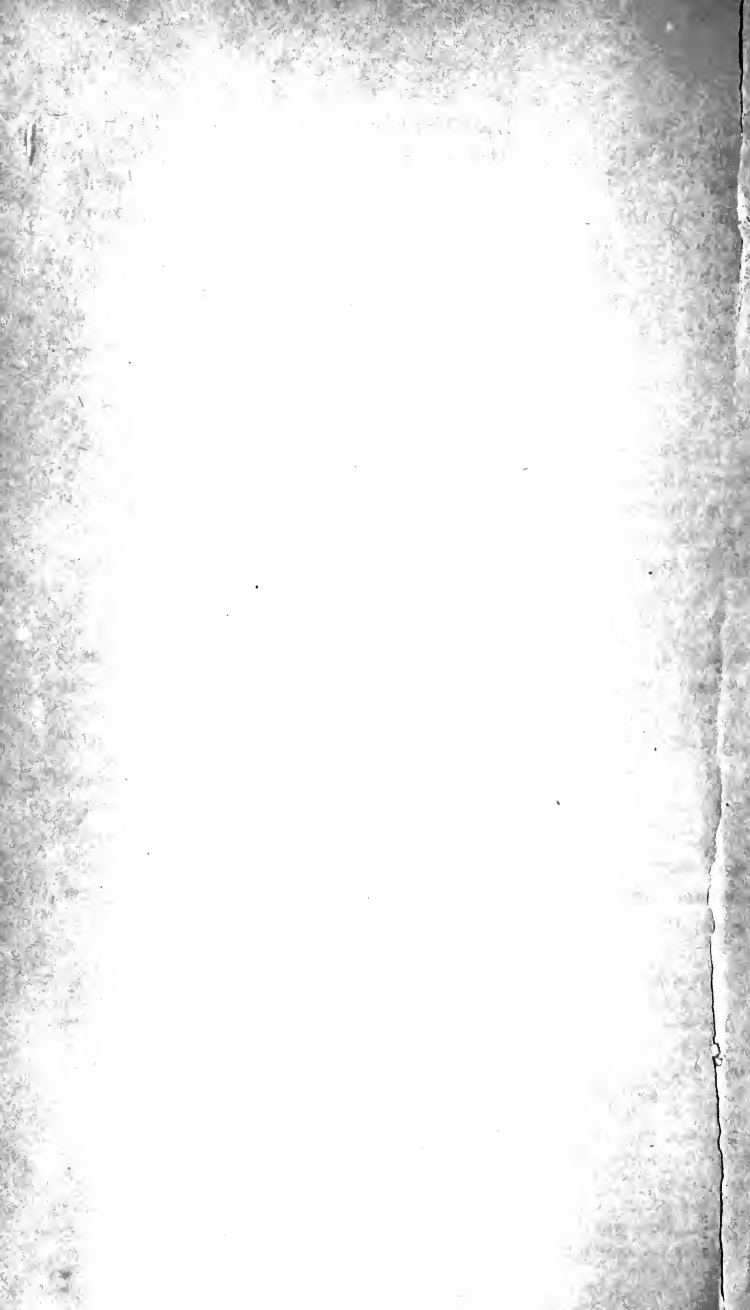
And when the question is thus narrowed, and if we still trust to experience, and not to speculation, as our only safe guide, I apprehend that we have such clear and overwhelming evidence of the inadequacy and insufficiency of Voluntary Charity, in the advanced stages of society, to "supply our brethren with sufficient for their need in that which they want," and preserve the poor from extreme destitution and degradation, as must gradually carry conviction to all unprejudiced minds.

I entertain, therefore, a sanguine hope, that the people of Scotland will, in no long time, very generally admit the fallacy of the opinion which has been so zealously inculcated upon them, that all legal provision for the poor is an evil. The evils are Poverty, Destitution, and Mendicity,—evils inherent in human nature, clearly pointed out in Scripture, and experienced by all nations. The legal provision is the *remedy*; it is liable to abuse, as all powerful remedies are; some of these abuses have existed, and been corrected in England, and may be avoided by us: human judgment and reason must be employed in administering, as well as in devising it; still, on the whole, it is *the only remedy* (for the evils above stated) which has stood the test of experience. Nor is it attributing too much to the results of experience to assert, that a uniform provision for the poor, authorized and defined by the law, preserving them from misery and degradation, and fostering the feeling of artificial wants and the habits of comfort,—but at the same time strongly marking the distinction between

would indeed have been a singular and perplexing anomaly, if Revelation, instead of assisting him in this difficulty, had expressly directed him to do that which must necessarily aggravate the evil. And whoever can shew that this inconsistency between the words of Revelation and the natural consequences of human conduct does not exist, may humbly hope that he has done something to justify the ways of God to Man.



the pauper and the independent member of society—will be found effectually to restrain the tendency to excessive population ; and that human benevolence, thus regulated and directed, will furnish not only the best remedy, but the most effectual antidote to the evils of poverty and destitution ;—not, certainly, sufficient to banish them from the earth, but to keep them under control in a degree in which they actually are controlled at this moment in other parts of Europe, and not in this country.



## P R E F A C E

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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In undertaking to give an opinion on a subject of such extent and importance as the nature of the provisions which it is right and expedient to make for the relief of poverty, in this or any other civilized country, I am quite aware that I may be thought to have entered on a discussion, which is both without my province and beyond my powers.

When it is stated, however, that in the two greatest cities of Scotland, where the science and civilization of the country may be supposed to have attained their highest development, and where medical schools exist, claiming as high a rank in point of practical usefulness as any in Europe, the annual proportion of deaths to the population is not only much beyond the average of Britain, but very considerably greater than that of London, it surely cannot be thought beyond the province of one who is honoured with a situation of trust and responsibility in the greatest of these medical schools, to endeavour to investigate the causes of this mortality, and the means by which it may be diminished.\*

\* It appears from the first Annual Report of the Registrar-general in England, that since the improved system of registration there has been adopted, the annual mortality in England and Wales has been found to be nearly 1 in 45 (First Report, &c. p. 13), and the deaths in London from July 1837 till July 1838 (including, however, a very severe winter), were 53,597 in a population which, in 1831, amounted to almost exactly 1,595,000. This gives an apparent mortality of 1 in 29.7; but if the increase of population in London be, as is generally believed, nearly 2 per cent. per annum, the real mortality in that year (one of great fatality) must have been less than 1 in 32: indeed, it is stated in a statistical paper lately published in London, at 1 in 36.† In the city of Edinburgh and West Church parish (excluding the Canongate), the population in 1831 was 136,100. The number of deaths registered in the burial grounds belonging to the City and West Church were, from May 1837 to May

† See Medical Gazette, April 1840.

Nor can it be thought presumptuous for one who has been for many years daily engaged as a Dispensary and Hospital Physician, in applying remedies to diseases which have obviously been the result of privations and sufferings in the poorest of his fellow citizens, and too often found them ineffectual, or known that they could be only temporarily useful, simply because he had no remedy for the privations from which they originated,—to extend his inquiries to the grand evil of Poverty itself, and endeavour to apply to it the same principles of investigation, by which physicians are guided in determining the immediate causes and remedies of disease.

It is generally admitted in all civilized countries, and indeed is the reason for constituting a separate department of medical instruction under the name of Medical Police,—that the prevention of Disease on a large scale may often be in the power of a community, although beyond the power of many of the inhabitants composing that community; and the present inquiry is an attempt to apply that principle to the great mass of disease and suffering which springs from poverty and destitution.

In following out this inquiry, I have long since formed, and do not scruple to express, an opinion, which I cannot expect to

1838, 4856, giving, as compared with 136,100, an apparent mortality of 1 in 28; and from what we know of the circumstances of the town since 1831, I have no doubt that the increase of population here between 1831 and 1837 must have been at a much slower rate than in London: that the real difference of mortality, therefore, was greater than the apparent, and that the mortality throughout Edinburgh in 1837-8, was more than 1 in 30. But if we confine ourselves to those belonging to the city of Edinburgh, we find that the burials were 2746, in a population, in 1831, of 55,200, or 1 in 20.1; and even if we suppose that population to have extended to 60,000 since that time (which I have no doubt is beyond the truth), we find a mortality of 1 in 21.8. This is probably somewhat overstated, because a greater number of funerals from neighbouring parishes may take place in the city burying-grounds than from the city in neighbouring parishes; but there can be no doubt that the real mortality in the city greatly exceeds that in the neighbouring parishes, and must, therefore, have been considerably more than 1 in 30 in that year, probably hardly less than the mortality in Glasgow in that year, which was 1 in 24; and this in a town where there are hardly any manufacturer, and the ordinary business of which is liable to little fluctuation. In Glasgow, it is perfectly ascertained that the *average* mortality since 1830 has been as high as 1 in 30, and that in 1832 and 1837 (the years of Cholera and of Typhus), it was 1 in 21, and 1 in 24. The above calculation is stated somewhat differently in the first edition, but as here given shews more distinctly how far it is rested on probability.

be in the first instance either well received or generally credited in this country, viz. that the higher ranks in Scotland do much less (and what they do, less systematically, and therefore less effectually) for the relief of poverty and of sufferings resulting from it, than those of any other country in Europe which is really well regulated; and much less than experience shews to be necessary, in any long inhabited and fully peopled country, in order that the lower ranks may be maintained in tolerable comfort, and a proper foundation laid for their religious and moral improvement. However unpopular this doctrine may be in the first instance, I am confident that those who take the trouble of inquiry will find it to be strictly true; and have no apprehension that I shall ultimately suffer in the estimation of my countrymen on account of having pointed out this truth, and drawn the inferences which I think naturally result from it.

When I say that I consider the amount of poverty and consequent suffering as the main cause of the great mortality in Edinburgh and Glasgow, I am aware that many will accuse me of overlooking what they regard as the most powerful of all causes of distress among the lower people, the use of intoxicating liquors. Several considerations, however, may be adduced to shew, that however powerful as a secondary and more immediate cause of disease and mortality, this is neither the most fundamental nor the most remediable cause of the high mortality of these towns.

*First*, the greatest mortality, in these as in other great towns, is in young children, below the age at which this cause can operate directly. *Secondly*, The same excess of mortality among the poorest people is seen in the great towns of milder climates, where the same habits of intoxication do not prevail. *Thirdly*, Although the use of intoxicating liquors is more offensively exhibited, and is often more injurious, both morally and physically, among the poorest of the people than in any other class, yet I am satisfied from observation, that the quantity actually consumed by them in a given time, is much less than by equal numbers of individuals, who might be selected from almost every other rank of society,—among whom, nevertheless, the mortality is much smaller; the proportion of deaths in every great town being always greatest among the poorest of its inhabitants. There must therefore be some additional or accessory cause, which makes

this practice much more dangerous and fatal, among the poorest of the inhabitants of every great town than among others ; and no one who observes the habits of that class of society can doubt that this auxiliary cause is simply the want of sufficient nourishment and sufficient clothing. *Lastly*, Experience sufficiently demonstrates, that, among people in this climate, reduced to a certain point of depression or destitution, the temptation to drown care in intoxicating liquors, whenever these are within their reach, is very seldom permanently resisted ; so that, in attempting the improvement of the lowest rank of the population, it is impossible, in most cases, to apply a remedy *directly* to this part of the evil. But I think experience likewise shews, that it is possible to prevent any large portion of the population from sinking to that point of depression at which the tendency to drunkenness becomes strongest ; and its injurious effect upon health, for the reason already given, becomes greatest and surest.

A considerable part of the general reasonings, on the subject of the effect of Poor Rates on the population, and on the prosperity and happiness of a nation, contained in the following treatise, were published at my request a few years ago, in one of the most extensively circulated of the periodical publications of the day, at the time of the public discussions as to the introduction of a Poor Law into Ireland, in the view of contributing my humble mite towards the removal of the prejudices and errors (as I believe them) which had so long obstructed that great, but tardy and still imperfect, act of national justice.

I cannot allow this volume to go before the public, without expressing my cordial thanks to several friends who have kindly assisted me in the inquiries of which it contains the results ; particularly to Dr Cowan, Professor of Medical Jurisprudence and Police in Glasgow, and author of the well-known Treatise on Vital Statistics, Dr J. P. Kay, Assistant Poor-Law Commissioner in London, and author of a Treatise on the Condition of the Poor in Manchester, P. B. Duncan, Esq. of New College, Oxford, Dr Ainsworth of Manchester, Dr Elliot of Carlisle, and Dr Robert Elliot of Gateshead, and the correspondents of several of these gentlemen in other parts of England. And to these names I have now much pleasure in adding those of Dr Davidson of Dundee, and more especially of Mr F. Hill, Inspector of Prisons.

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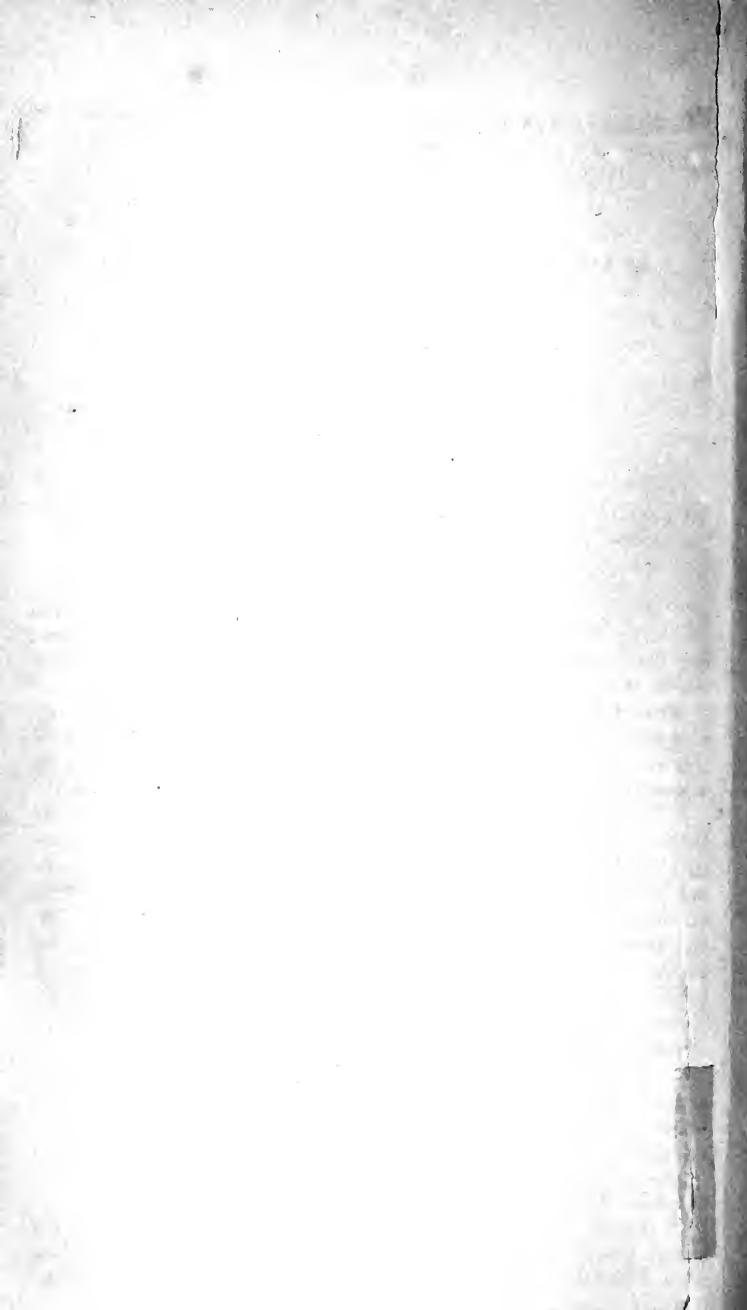
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ON THE

MANAGEMENT OF THE POOR

IN SCOTLAND.

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Having been, for many years past, a witness of great, and, I am sorry to add, of increasing sufferings among the poor of this city—having satisfied myself that those sufferings here, and in Glasgow, and other large towns in Scotland, are much greater and more general than in towns of equal size in the best regulated parts of Europe,—and being thoroughly convinced, that the opinions generally entertained in Scotland as to the best means of relieving them are very erroneous,—I feel it to be a duty to lay the result of my observations and inquiries before the public.

That I do not speak unadvisedly, when I use the word *increasing*, will appear from the following facts, which, being taken from the records of public institutions, are not liable to the fallacies which might be suspected in the statements of any individual.

1. The expenditure of the Society for the Relief of the Destitute Sick, the members of which are uniformly men of experience in regard to the habits of the poor, and never grant relief without personal inspection, in their own houses, of families suffering at once under disease and destitution, has increased from L.736, the average of the years 1814, 1815, and 1816, to L.1816, the average of the years 1836, 1837, and 1838; and the number of individuals receiving relief from them has increased from 3223, the average number in the three former years, to 10,570, the average of the three latter years.

2. The records of the Royal Infirmary shew, that there has been a similar increase both in the number of its inmates, and also in the severity of the diseases under which they have sought refuge there, as indicated by a progressively increasing mortality. The fact is sufficiently established by the following extract from the last Report of the Managers of the Infirmary.

“Above 4000 of the inhabitants of Edinburgh and Leith” (or about 1 in 40 of the whole population of these towns, and not less than 1 in 20 of the whole adult population) “have sought refuge

in the Infirmary during the last year. And that they have not done so on account of slighter ailments than formerly (as some might have suspected), appears undeniably from this fact, that whereas, thirty years ago, the mortality in the Infirmary seldom exceeded 1 in 20 of the whole patients admitted, it has gradually risen until, in the last year, it amounted to nearly 1 in 8." The whole number of patients admitted in 1838 was 4903, of whom 850 were from a distance. The average whole number for thirteen years preceding 1837 had been 2252. Before 1818 (a year of epidemic fever), the number had never reached 2200.

It is true, that of the 4900, 2200 were fever cases, but many ordinary cases were refused for want of room, the accommodation of the fever cases being of paramount importance.

It is unnecessary to quote numerical statements in order to shew that the numbers receiving medical relief at the Dispensaries during that time has increased in a much larger proportion. On this last fact I do not dwell, because the "test of destitution" in the case of Dispensary patients is certainly not so complete as in the case of the other charities I have mentioned. But as the expenditure of the Destitute Sick Society is guarded and checked in the way I have mentioned,\* and as few of the poor in this country resort to the Infirmary who can maintain themselves in any comfort at home, the experience of these two institutions may be held to be sufficient proof, that the amount of suffering from the combination of poverty and disease, has been nearly tripled in the city of Edinburgh within the last twenty-five years, while the population has not increased more than 50 per cent.

3. As the people admitted into the House of Refuge are there confined and subjected to a strict discipline, that institution may be said to offer a test of destitution, as complete as the charities for the relief of sickness. No such institution existed before 1832, when it was formed on account of the danger apprehended from begging and vagrancy during the time of the Cholera. It has been maintained since that time, and has on an average admitted annually (generally for a short sojourn only) above 1600 persons, about 100 of whom have been paupers paid for by their

\* The members of this Society have been so careful to avoid imposition or misapplication of their bounty, that they generally decline visiting common lodging-houses, and their visitors often refrain from giving relief in some of the most destitute parts of the town, which are commonly inhabited by people of bad character; and although these rules are sometimes relaxed, I know that they have excluded from the benefits of the charity many persons in extreme want. The number of such wretched objects, refused relief by this Society, often have no ascertained parish claim, often unable to procure such clothing as they will present themselves with at the Infirmary, or refused admittance there, as not being proper objects of the charity, has certainly increased very considerably of late years.

parishes, after proof of destitution ; and at least 1200 more have been persons, of whose extreme indigence the Managers have satisfied themselves by strict scrutiny. The limited funds of the institution (those proceeding from subscriptions, have varied from L.850 to L.650 per annum) have obliged the Managers every year to reject many other applications from equally indigent persons.

It is also to be remembered, that within a very few years before the year 1836, about 1200 of the population of Edinburgh had been carried off by the Cholera, and I believe a larger number by the Influenza, and that these epidemics had fallen especially on that part of the population which might be supposed to be most burdensome on the charities above mentioned, and might be expected therefore to have lessened the pressure on them.

It cannot be overlooked, that, from various causes, the expenditure of the higher ranks in Edinburgh, as proportioned to the increasing population, has considerably declined of late years. Almost all the noble families, and many of the gentlemen, of the class who formerly had large establishments here, now pass the winter in London. There has been a great reduction in the establishments both of the Courts of Law, and of the different Public Boards formerly existing here. The resort to the University has also somewhat declined ; many building speculations have turned out unprofitable, the price of houses has fallen very much, and the employment of numerous labourers in the buildings lately carried on here has ceased. Thus, the number of persons who have been thrown out of employment, or whose employment has been rendered irregular and precarious, is very great ; and although public begging in the streets is prohibited, great numbers are supported either by begging in the neighbourhood, or by various devices for extorting private charity from persons to whom they are strangers. Many of them, and often the most clamorous, make false representations as to their condition ; but the great majority, as I can testify from ample experience, whatever their former character or conduct may have been (and in that respect there is much greater variety than many suppose), are really in extreme destitution. The gradually increasing number of women with families, whose husbands have left them in search of work, and often ultimately deserted them, must have struck all who have attended particularly to their condition.

It is also to be remembered, that this and all other assessed districts in Scotland, present a point of attraction to the poor of the numerous districts in Scotland (517 parishes) where there is no assessment for the poor, and often no hospital or other medical charity. The medical charities here are much burdened with cases, often incurable, from those districts ; and as long as the

relief given in those parts of the country is so small, while the law apportioned some allowance (scanty although it be) to all infirm and destitute persons who have lived three years in Edinburgh, I apprehend it will act as a continued bounty on the importation of distressed and half employed families from those districts.\* Above all, this law has long acted as a bounty on the importation of such families from Ireland; which has gone to such an extremity as fully to justify the observation, "that if we are to cut off the sources of mendicity, we must first cut off Ireland."

It need hardly be added, after what has now been stated, that the condition of great numbers of the poor in Edinburgh, particularly during the winter, is one of extreme destitution; approaching in many respects very closely to that which has long been the subject of astonishment and compassion to those who have visited the worst parts of Dublin and other Irish towns, and of which I shall extract a few descriptions, almost at random, from the reports of the medical men who have seen most of the state of the poor in Ireland.

"A population increasing but not improving, blending most of the evils of civilization with the ignorance, apathy, sloth, and dirty habits of complete barbarism: such is the melancholy picture presented by the lowest classes in this country." "Nothing can be conceived more unpropitious to the human constitution than the state in which many of these families in Dublin live, *several confined in the same room*, in an atmosphere impregnated with all kinds of effluvia; besides the houses, the lanes and alleys in which the poorest class reside being in such a miserable state of filth, as to be scarcely passable by any but their own squalid inhabitants."†

"Many years' continuance of misery has nearly extinguished all that hope and buoyancy of spirits, for which the poor people of this city were remarkable in their better days. These have been succeeded by indifference to their situation, to the approach of disease or even of death, surprising and unaccountable to a casual observer, and the more to be deplored, as it leads many of them to neglect the means of preservation."‡

"With natural advantages not exceeded by those of any other

\* The following extract from a communication from Captain Thomson, the excellent treasurer of the House of Refuge, will shew the extent to which this evil has gone. "I should say that fully *one-third* of the persons who apply for admission at the House of Refuge belong to country parishes, and are, from age, disability, or youth, *bona fide objects requiring parochial aid*,—and a great part of the funds of the House of Refuge is spent in the relief and maintenance of such persons."

† Medical Report of the Dublin "Sick Poor Institution," by Dr O'Brien, in *Transactions of College of Physicians in Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 477.

‡ Stoker, Medical Report of the Fever Hospital, in the same volume, p. 410.

country in the world, this kingdom now unfortunately exhibits not merely casual instances of wretchedness, but large masses of misery ;—intemperance and irregularity of every kind, desultory application to labour, alternated with intervals of total idleness, habitual dissatisfaction and despondency, poverty, and residence in crowded, filthy, and ill-ventilated dwellings.”\*

The condition of the poorest part of Dublin was thus more minutely stated in a report made, in the winter of 1817, to the Governors of the House of Industry by their inspectors: “ In Barrack Street, 52 houses contain, in 390 apartments, 1318 persons, of which number 392 adults are unemployed, most of whom are in a state of extreme indigence.” “ In 71 houses in Church Street and adjoining courts, consisting of 393 apartments, 1997 persons dwell, of whom 628 are without employment. Foul lanes, courts, and yards, are interposed between this and the adjoining streets. There are many cellars which have no light but from the door ; in some of those cellars, the inhabitants sleep on the floors, which are earthen, but, in general, they have bedsteads. Nicholson’s Court contains 151 persons in 28 small apartments, of whom 89 are unemployed: their state is very miserable, there being only two bedsteads and two blankets in the whole court.”†

It is well known that, as a palliative of the evils resulting from this state of things in Dublin, the Mendicity Association was established, which at present admits daily, from all parts of the town, about 2500 miserable creatures (*i. e.* nearly 1 in 100 of the inhabitants of the city), keeps them all day under cover, and, after giving them two meals, dismisses them at night to their homes. I do not speak without some observation of both cities when I say, that, if a similar institution existed here, it would soon be tenanted by a proportion not much smaller, and hardly less wretched, of the inhabitants of the Old Town of Edinburgh.

That I am not singular in thinking that the condition of a large number of the lowest of the people of Edinburgh, whose employment is irregular and precarious, approaches very nearly to that which is thus described in Dublin, will appear distinctly from two short quotations. The first is from a pamphlet by Mr Tait, surgeon, and Commissioner of Police, “ On Foul Water Irrigation,” written to shew, what is certainly strictly true, that the diffusion of fever in Edinburgh depends on causes acting within the city, much more than on such irrigation of meadows at some distance from it. “ In many of the closes leading from

\* Grattan’s Report of the Fever Hospital in Dublin, *id. lib.* vol. iii. p. 367, *et seq.*

† Account of the Fever lately epidemical in Ireland, by Drs Barker and Cheyne, vol. ii. p. 161.

the High Street to the Cowgate, every stair and every vacant apartment becomes the depository of every thing that is filthy. One flat alone, situated in Foulis' Close, may give an idea of the extent to which dunghills within doors and in houses inhabited by poor families are sometimes carried. However dirty and confined this close is, it is, in many respects, superior to Blackfriars' Wynd. Every attempt at a description of the latter would come so far short of the truth, that we must abandon it for the present, in the hope that some curious visitor will, at a future day, contrast its former splendour with its present filthy and wretched condition, and give an idea to the world to what stage misery and wretchedness may be brought."

The next is from the evidence given by the Rev. Dr Lee, Minister of the Old Church, before the Commissioners of Religious Instruction, 18th Feb. 1836, on the state of another portion of the Old Town: "I have seen much wretchedness in my time, but never such a concentration of misery as in this parish. Some of the Irish in it are very wretched, but by far the most wretched are Scotch. I have seen a mother and five daughters with another woman, in a house where there was neither chair nor table, stool, bed, or blanket, nor any kind of implement for cooking. She had the largest allowance given by the Charity Workhouse, 2s. 6d. a-week." "I frequently see the same room occupied by two married couples, neither having a bed." "I have been in one day in seven houses where there was no bed, in some of them not even straw. I found people of eighty years of age lying on the boards." "Many sleep in the same clothes which they wear during the day. I may mention the case of two Scotch families living in a miserable kind of cellar, who had come from the country within a few months, in search of work. Since they came they had had two dead, and another apparently dying. In the place they inhabit, it is impossible at noonday to distinguish the features of the human face without artificial light. There was a little bundle of dirty straw in one corner, for one family, and in another for the other. An ass stood in one corner, which was as well accommodated as these human creatures. It would almost make a heart of adamant bleed to see such an accumulation of human misery in a country like this." A description in very similar terms, of a third portion of the Old Town, the neighbourhood of the Grassmarket, is given by the late Dr Hennen in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*.\* My friend and former assistant Dr Kay, one of the assistant Poor-Law Commissioners, and author of a very instructive work on the state of the poor at Manchester, states, in a



letter with which he lately favoured me, that the only parallels he had seen to the wretchedness of the Irish and low Scotch population of Edinburgh, are in the Irish of Manchester and the weavers of Spitalfields.\*

That there has been a still more rapid increase of destitution, and that similar "scenes of wholesale human degradation and misery" exist to a still greater extent in Glasgow, is sufficiently shewn, *first*, by a few of the facts recorded by the Committee appointed there last year, to inquire into the cause of the increased assessment. "The aid to casual poor exhibits more than a three-fold increase between 1829 and 1837," and "the expenditure for coffins, for paupers and their children, is nearly *four* times as great now as in 1829-30."† *Secondly*, the same is shewn by some sentences recording observations made by one of the Assistant Commissioners on the Handloom Inquiry:—"The wynds in Glasgow comprise a fluctuating population of from 15,000 to 30,000 persons. This quarter consists of a labyrinth of lanes, out of which numberless entrances lead into small square courts, each with a dunghill reeking in the centre. Revolting as was the outward appearances of these places, I was little prepared for the filth and destitution within. In some of these lodging-rooms (visited at night) we found a whole lair of human beings littered along the floor, sometimes fifteen and twenty, some clothed and some naked; men, women, and children huddled promiscuously together. Their bed consisted of a layer of musty straw, intermixed with rags. There was gene-

\* I know that some doubt has been expressed in regard to the accuracy of this representation of the destitution in Edinburgh, but if it were necessary I could produce a more minute and authentic record of it. It may be thought sufficient, however, to state, that of 55,200 inhabitants of the ancient royalty (the population of which has, I believe, hardly increased since this number was ascertained in 1831), above 1200 are women drawing pensions from the Charity Work-house, that above 800 of these are widows, and more than 400 have families of children dependent on them,—that the pensions to all these women are purposely kept much below what is necessary to support life,—and that the employments for women (hardly any of which yield more than 8d. a-day) are so completely overstocked, that almost all of them are several months in the year out of employment; that there are great numbers of single women, able for work, and of Irish and other stranger women with families, who have no parish allowance, but are likewise out of work during several months of the year; and that every winter there are a great number of men with families, labourers, and artizans of different kinds, out of work for two, three, or four months, besides those who are disabled by sickness. That all these persons and their families must be reduced to a very destitute state, and be more or less dependent on assistance from voluntary charity, seems hardly to require ocular evidence. In so far as this voluntary charity takes the form of regular institutions, it is for the most part inapplicable to this extensive destitution, independent of disease; in so far as it is merely private, any one who studies the subject may see that it is very irregular, precarious, often misapplied, demoralizing, and generally inefficient.

† Report, &c. p. 4.

rally little or no furniture in these places; the sole article of comfort was a fire. Thieving and prostitution constitute the main sources of the revenue of this population. No pains seem to be taken to purge this Augean pandemonium, this nucleus of crime, filth, and pestilence, existing in the centre of the second city of the empire. These wynds constitute the St Giles' of Glasgow, but I owe an apology to the metropolitan pandemonium for the comparison. *A very extensive inspection of the lowest districts of other places, both here and on the Continent, never presented any thing one-half so bad, either in intensity of pestilence, physical and moral, or in extent, proportioned to the population.\** It is from the extent to which this mode of life here prevails, that Glasgow exhibits, as Dr Cowan states, "a frightful rate of mortality, unequalled, probably, in any city in Britain." Since 1830, the average annual mortality there has been 1 in 30; in 1832, it was 1 in 21.67, and in 1837, 1 in 24.63,—the average annual mortality in London being probably below 1 in 35, and over England certainly below 1 in 45.

I have next to observe, that, for many years past, contagious fever has never been absent from Edinburgh, and there have been three great epidemics of that disease in the last twenty-two years, beginning in 1817, 1826, and 1836 (the last of which has now nearly subsided), each lasting nearly three years, and each of the two last affecting, I believe, nearly ten thousand persons. The number of fever patients admitted into the Infirmary, and Auxiliary Fever Hospital, from November 1817 to November 1820, was 3090;—from November 1826 to November 1829, it was 4318,—and from October 1836 to October 1839, it was 4850.

When we remember the number of young children affected with fever on all these occasions, the number of the poor who refused to go to the Infirmary, or were too far advanced in the disease, when seen by the medical men attending them, to be removed, and the number of fever patients in the middle or higher ranks, we can hardly suppose the number admitted into the Infirmary during any of these epidemics, to have been more than one-half of the whole. The abatement of the disease between the two last epidemics was less complete than between the two first, and the mortality, as well as the extent of the last of these, has been greater than of either of the former, having amounted in 1830 to no less than one in six of all the fever patients admitted into the Infirmary. The prevalence of epidemic fever in Edinburgh becomes more important as an indication of the tendency to the disease in the population, when we

\* Arts and Artisans at Home and Abroad, by J. C. Symons, Esq. P. 116, *et seq.*

remember that, ever since 1817, the arrangements for removing fever patients to hospital, immediately on the disease being recognised,—for fumigating and cleaning their houses, and for supporting their families during their absence,—have, by the combined exertions of the Dispensaries, Fever Board, and Destitute Sick Society, been superior, I believe, to those in any other town in Britain; and that, with the exception of two or three weeks of last winter, the Infirmary and Auxiliary Hospitals have always been able to accommodate all the patients sent thither. But for these advantages, the numbers of fever cases here would probably have equalled those at Glasgow.

It is farther to be remembered, that the effect of the mortality of fever on the happiness of the community cannot be estimated merely from knowing its amount; for (unlike some other epidemic diseases) it always falls most heavily on the most valuable lives, particularly among the poor. An observation made by one of the Irish physicians who reported to Government on the great epidemic of 1817, is perfectly applicable to all that we have seen of the disease since that time in Edinburgh. “*The heads of families, almost without exception, became the victims, while the rest escaped. The widows and orphans, who are so numerous in every quarter, can bear a sad testimony to the truth of this well-known observation.*”\*

“A fever which consigns thousands to the grave,” says Dr Harty, “consigns tens of thousands to a worse fate, to hopeless poverty; for fever spares the children, and cuts off the parents, leaving the wretched offspring to fill the future ranks of prostitution, mendicancy, and crime.” “The mortality of fever,” says Dr Barker, “is most frequent where it is most injurious, viz. in men advanced in life, the heads and supports of families. The increase of poverty and mendicity, and the agonizing mental distress to which it must give rise, are consequences which must occur to every reflecting mind.” There is no exaggeration in the simple and impressive statement of Dr Cowan, that “the prevalence of fever presents obstacles to the promotion of social improvement among the lower classes, and is productive of an amount of human misery, credible only to those who have witnessed it.”† In the last situation in which I have seen fever prevailing epidemically in Edinburgh (new land at the foot of the Old Fishmarket Close), I find, on inquiry, that five families, out of the inhabitants of twelve rooms in the two upper-flats of the house, have been rendered fatherless by it.

\* Letter of Dr Bracken, in the “Account of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Fever lately Epidemical in Ireland,” by Drs Barker and Cheyne.—Dublin, 1821, vol. i. p. 198.

† “Statistics of Fever and Small-Pox in Glasgow.” P. 14.

The mortality occasioned by contagious fever in the medical profession, is of itself an item of no small amount in the general estimate of the sufferings, bodily and mental, resulting from it, and has been much felt in Edinburgh. When I mention the names (among my own friends and contemporaries) of Dr John Gordon, Dr James Gregory, Dr Mackintosh, and Dr John Home, all of whom fell victims to contagious fever, caught in the performance of their duty, I shall make myself sufficiently understood. It has fallen to my lot, within the last two years, to witness the premature death of no less than sixteen promising young men, connected with the University, from this cause; and it is well known how often fever, caught by contagion from the poor, has cut off some of the most respected clergymen and others who interest themselves in the work of charity, here and elsewhere.

These repeated and severe visitations of fever, demand special consideration on this account, that they are not merely the *occasion* of much and widely spread suffering and destitution, but they “argue a foregone conclusion;” they are, as I shall endeavour to shew, in a great measure the result, and the *indication and test*, of much previous misery and destitution,—and I believe never occur, in peaceful times and in wealthy communities, where the condition of the lower orders is so generally comfortable, as it certainly is in some parts of Europe, and as every man of benevolent and Christian feeling must wish and hope that it may be made in all.

When I say, that I consider the repeated recurrence of extensive epidemic fever, as a clear indication of great previous suffering among the poor, I am perfectly aware that the assertion may be open to some objection. We all know that contagious fever may exist, and spread to a certain extent, where there is no destitution; and we know also, that destitution may exist (although I believe never for a length of time, and in a large town) without fever shewing itself. I believe also, that fever extends much more rapidly, or possesses a stronger contagious property, in some seasons than others, in all ranks of the community. It is not asserted that destitution is a cause adequate to the *production* of fever (although in some circumstances I believe it may become such); nor that it is the *sole* cause of its extension. What we are sure of is, that it is a cause of the *rapid diffusion* of contagious fever, and one of such peculiar power and efficacy, that its existence may always be presumed, when we see fever prevailing in a large community to an unusual extent. The manner in which deficient nourishment, want of employment, and privations of all kinds, and the consequent mental depression, favour the diffusion of fever, may be matter of dispute; but that they have that effect in a much greater degree than any cause external to

the human body itself, is a fact confirmed by the experience of all physicians who have seen much of the disease.\*

"Next to contagion," says Dr Grattan, "I consider a *distressed state* of the general population of any particular district, the most common and most extensive source of typhoid fever; whether this has been the result of war, or been produced by the more gradual progress of domestic misfortune." "The present epidemic (that of Ireland in 1818) is principally to be referred to the miserable condition of the poorer classes in this kingdom; and so long as their state shall continue unimproved, so long will fever prevail, probably not to its present extent, but certainly to an extent sufficient to render it at all times a national affliction." "In crowded cities, especially when much poverty prevails, the inhabitants, listless and desponding, become inattentive to cleanliness in their persons and habitations, their contracted means compel numbers to reside in the same dwelling, and their apartments are in general filthy and ill ventilated. In winter, in consequence of the want of fuel and of sufficient clothing, any aperture is closed through which the air might procure admission. In these circumstances, the contagion of fever is often developed, and then almost every individual within the sphere of its opera-

\* In the Appendix to the fourth Report of the Poor-Law Commissioners, it is stated by Drs Arnot, Kay, and Southwood Smith, that the malaria arising from putrefying animal and vegetable matters produces typhoid fevers. Although I highly respect all these gentlemen, and approve of the practical inference which they draw from that opinion, so far as it goes, because I have no doubt that vitiated air, like all other causes which weaken the constitution, favours the diffusion of fever—yet I cannot subscribe to their opinion, that this cause is of itself adequate to the production of contagious fever. And if, trusting to that opinion, the public authorities should think it sufficient, in any situation where contagious fever is prevalent, to remove all *dead* animal and vegetable matter, without attempting to improve the condition of the *living* inhabitants, I am confident that their labour will be in vain. The true specific cause of the contagious fever, at least of Edinburgh, certainly does not spring from any thing external to the living human body. I have stated much evidence on this point in a paper in the Edinburgh Medical Journal for 1828, and could easily adduce much more. A case in point is given in a letter contained in the Appendix in question, from Mr Evans, surgeon in the Borough. "I have attended, in nine months, above 500 pauper cases of fever, but cannot trace it to any local cause, for we have in the parish of St George very good drainage, and very little accumulated filth, with the exception of certain courts and lanes, and *there the disease does not exist more severely than over the parish in general.*" Another occurs to me in the letters of Dr Barry of Cork, published by Drs Barker and Cheyne. "More than once, on visiting the neighbourhood of deposits of manure, I have witnessed much misery in the inhabitants, shewn by general emaciation, &c. and yet they have been exposed to the continued agency of these exhalations, without shewing any symptoms of fever. Sooner or later the disease found entrance, and *then* swept away the inhabitants in great numbers." He gives instances similar to what I have repeatedly seen myself, where fever spread in the upper rooms of houses in such situations, while the lower, "in the most abominable state of filth," were free from it; all shewing, as our experience in Edinburgh does, that this is a cause of the *extension*, not of the *generation*, of fever. See Barker and Cheyne, vol. i. p. 295.

tion, and predisposed by the debilitating effects of mental anxiety, is attacked by the disease.”\*

That it is always in persons suffering, or who have lately suffered, similar privations and sufferings, and the mental depression and despondency which naturally attend them, that continued fever becomes extensively prevalent, is fully established by the history of all considerable epidemics. The elaborate work of Drs Cheyne and Barker, shews that this has been strictly true of all the great epidemics which have appeared in Ireland since 1700, each of them lasting fully two years, viz. in 1708, 1720, and 1731, in 1740–41 (after the great frost of 1740), in 1800–1801, after the rebellion, the transference of the seat of government to London, and the scarcity of 1799 and 1800; and, again, in 1817, after the “transition from the state of war to that of peace,” and the scarcity of 1816 and 1817. That work contains reports from the most eminent physicians in all parts of Ireland on that great epidemic, all agreeing in the statement, that “the poor were the greatest sufferers, and *the fever seemed to rage among them in a degree proportionate to the privations they had endured.*” In Ireland, accordingly, at least during the present century, as the general condition of the poor has been decidedly worse than either in England or Scotland, so contagious fever has never ceased to be more generally prevalent. The same observation applies to the epidemic fever in London after the scarcity of 1800 (the last great epidemic which has occurred there),—to the great epidemic continental fever of 1813–1814, which followed the track of the French army retreating from Russia, but never made much progress in the victorious allied army,—to the epidemic fever of 1817 in Italy, consequent on the scarce year 1816,—to the epidemic which affected the British army in Holland after the disastrous retreat from Flanders in 1794,—in Portugal after that from Burgos in 1812,—and to that which nearly decimated the British Legion at Vittoria in 1836.

That the same cause has acted very powerfully in producing the recent epidemics in Scotland, appears distinctly from the following considerations.

*First*, It appears from observing the times of these epidemics, the first in Edinburgh beginning in 1817, after two bad harvests, and at the same time as the Irish one; the next in 1826, after the great failures in 1825, and the sudden cessation, particularly of building speculations, in Edinburgh; and the last in 1836, after the great depression of trade both in Glasgow and Dundee, with which towns the lower orders here are much connected, and under the combination of other circumstances already mentioned,

\* Trans. of Coll. of Phys. of Ireland, vol. iii. p. 66.

which have depressed the condition of the poor in Edinburgh of late years. In Glasgow, the evidence of the operation of this cause is still stronger; fever seems to have increased and diminished for forty years past, nearly as it did in Edinburgh, until the year 1836, when, after the great stagnation of trade, it became much more formidable. For twenty years before 1815, when the town was rapidly increasing in wealth, the number of fever patients in the Infirmary never exceeded 130 in the year. In the three years, 1817, 1818, and 1819, it amounted to 2715, or 905 in the year. It then diminished considerably, but rose after the failures in 1825, and in 1826, 27, and 28, amounted to 3520, or 1173 in the year. There was another increase of the disease in 1832; and after the great failures in 1835, it spread so extensively, that the numbers taken into hospitals in 1836, 37, and 38, amounted to 9740, or 3270 in the year, and of these 5387 were in the year 1837 alone. The hospital accommodation in Glasgow, has long been much less adequate to such extension of fever than that in Edinburgh, so that I believe in all the epidemics "numerous applicants for admission have been thrown back on their own resources, and left to spread the contagion of typhus around their miserable dwellings;" and in the last three years the whole number of cases of fever in Glasgow is computed at nearly 40,000; and the deaths from it are stated in the mortality bills to have been 3835, of which 2180 were in the year 1837 alone, constituting more than one-fifth of the whole mortality, and *exceeding by about one-fourth the deaths by "decline"* in that year, which were 1562.\*

Again, if these principles as to the connection of epidemic fever with misery and destitution are correct, we may expect to find another illustration of them in Dundee; where there has been, first, a great increase of the population, attracted by the rapid extension of manufactures, then a complete stagnation of trade, and suspension of manufactures, throwing great numbers out of employment; and lastly, a prevalent belief among the higher ranks, that "the older and better system of supporting the poor by voluntary contributions," ought to be preferred to assessments, and, in consequence, a legal provision, even in the worst times, hardly exceeding, as will afterwards appear, the average of the Scottish country parishes. Accordingly, we find that, prior to the year 1818, "little demand was made, comparatively speaking, on the Dundee Infirmary, for the reception of fever cases, but during that and the following year the disease raged to

\* In the summer of 1837, the number of unemployed male operatives in Glasgow, who applied for work from a public charity, was 3072, of whom 2273 were married men. (See Cowan's Vital Statistics, and Glasgow Mortality Bill for 1837, by Henry Paul.)

such an extent in the town and suburbs, that the house became inadequate to the wants of the community. Since that period, the progress of the disease has been various, but, on the whole, vastly *on the increase.*" The last epidemic appears to have attained its maximum there in 1836, when the fever patients in the Infirmary were 773, and the deaths from fever, stated in the Mortality Bills (which I understand to be kept very accurately), are 297. But in the four years 1836, 7, 8, and 9, fever continued very prevalent, and the deaths from it were 880,—the whole number of deaths in these years having been 7160, or 1790 in the year, in a population which, in 1831, was 45,000, but is since supposed to have extended, chiefly, however, by accessions from the country, to above 60,000.\*

From these facts we may infer, that nearly 10,000 inhabitants of Dundee, or nearly 1 in 6 of the population, must have had fever in these four years. The deaths by it were almost exactly one-eighth, or 12.5 per cent. of the whole mortality *throughout these years*, and *exceeded the deaths by consumption* as 880 to 767. In the year 1836 alone, the deaths by fever were nearly one-sixth, or 16 per cent. of the whole (297 in 1962), and exceeded those by consumption by nearly one-third, viz. as 297 to 200.

We have now an opportunity of comparing this mortality by fever in those Scottish cities with that which was recorded in England in the latter half of 1837, and which is stated in the First Annual Report of the Registrar-General of England. The extension of fever in the winter of 1837 in England was certainly much greater than for many years previously; and I cannot help suspecting that the statement of the deaths "from typhus" by the medical men throughout England is exaggerated; indeed it is stated by the author of this part of the Report, that under the head typhus "are included some cases of remittent fever,"† probably of children. But even in that year the mortality from fever throughout England is stated at about 6.4 per cent., *i. e.* about 1 in 16 of the whole mortality, and not one-third of the mortality from consumption; in London, it is less than 8 per cent., or one-twelfth, hardly half the mortality from consumption; in Manchester, 7.5 per cent., nearly a third of that from consumption; in Leeds, it is about 4 per cent., not one-fifth of that from consumption; even in Liverpool, where it is higher than any where else in England (probably from the great influx of the poor Irish), it is hardly above 10 per cent., and hardly more than half that from consumption.‡

\* See Report of Infirmary at Dundee for 1837-8, p. 5, and Dundee Bills of Mortality.

† Report, &c. p. 83.

‡ See First Report of the Registrar-General, p. 122, 23.



*Lastly*, The connexion of fever with destitution appears from the observation which I have myself made many hundreds of times in the Old Town of Edinburgh, that it is among those of the poor who suffer the greatest privations,—whose employment is precarious, often suspended, or little profitable,—and among disabled men, “lone women,” widows and orphans, especially among the poor Irish, or other strangers of this description,—that fever most frequently appears, and always spreads most rapidly and extensively.

These facts point to so intimate a connection between contagious fever and destitution, that I have no doubt we shall very constantly find, in regard to all large towns, where the structure of society is complex, that, if the condition of the poor is very bad, fever will be prevalent; and, if that be tolerably comfortable, it will be comparatively rare. This contrast is remarkably observed on comparing the *usual* health of the great towns of England with those either of Scotland or Ireland. Thus, the London Fever Hospital, which admits patients from all parts of the town on the certificate of any medical man, had only, as we learn from Dr Bateman, 600 inmates in the whole ten years preceding 1817.\* The number of fevers annually treated in the Manchester Fever Hospital, for seven years ending 1836, was 497, hardly one-

\* I am aware that fever has prevailed more extensively in London of late years, chiefly since the commercial distresses of 1835; and that, in a population of 850,000, in twenty Metropolitan Unions, there were, in the year ending March 1838, 12,700 cases (including those called synochus and typhus) attended by the medical officers of the parishes: certainly the largest number in any one year since 1800 (when Dr Willan computed the number at 40,000), and still hardly implying the affection of more than 1 in 60 of the population: whereas I believe the number affected last year in Edinburgh must have been nearly 1 in 30 of the population, and in Glasgow, the year before, it must have been nearly 1 in 10. The number of fever cases treated (in hospital or at home) by the medical officers of the St George the Martyr, Bethnal-Green, and Whitechapel Unions, in the year ending March 1838, was 4676, in a population of 165,928; but these were the districts in London most severely affected, and inhabited by those portions of the population who, according to the principles stated, will always be most liable to fever,—the poor of the Bethnal-Green Union, for example, being “almost universally hand-loom weavers,” “in wretched circumstances,” and parts of other districts most liable to fever being “chiefly inhabited by the *humblest classes of the Irish*, and the most abandoned of both sexes.” It is well worth notice too, that, in these Unions (as will afterwards appear), the usual expenditure on the poor—probably from so many of them being strangers—is much below the usual average in England, having been 4s. and 5s. on the population, when the average over England was above 7s. 6d. It is also to be observed as great part of the cause of the diffusion of fever in these parts of London, that the hospital accommodation, and means of removal of the patients out of their own houses (probably in consequence of the evil having long been slight), appear to be much inferior to those in Edinburgh. In others of the Middlesex districts, as in the Brentford and Edmonton Unions, except in very confined localities, it appears that, even at that time, there was “little if any cause of complaint on the score of fever.”—(See 4th Report of Commissioners, Appendix A, and 5th Report, Appendix C.)

fourth of those treated in Glasgow in the same years, although the population sending patients there is nearly equal, and comprises many Irish. In 1836 and 1837, the numbers treated in hospitals in Glasgow were 8512, and in Manchester 1391. The number of hospital patients in fever at Leeds, a manufacturing town with 123,000 inhabitants, was 274 in the year, on an average of seven years before 1836,—when the average at Glasgow was 1842. In Newcastle and Gateshead, the population of which is nearly 58,000, the number of fever patients taken into the institution appropriated to them was only 8 in the year for some years before 1817, and only 39 in the year for seven years preceding 1836.\* In Carlisle and its neighbourhood, a population of above 32,000 yielded 63 fever patients in the year to the house of recovery, on an average of seventeen years before 1838, but in that year there was an epidemic affecting about 600 persons, of whom 265 came into the hospital. In some other English towns, particularly those which are not manufacturing (from which I have been favoured with statements), the exemption from fever for many years together has been still more complete. In Oxford, it is stated that a population of 16,000 does not afford to the Infirmary five fever patients in the year, and very few to the workhouse. In Bath, where the population is 55,000 it is merely said that “few cases of fever occur either at the hospital or workhouse.” In Birmingham, where the population was 118,000 in 1831, and is thought now to be nearly 150,000, the number of cases by fever, including agues, treated in hospital in seven years ending 1839, was only 485, averaging 69 in the year. In Sunderland, where the population is nearly 50,000, only 53 cases of fever were taken into hospital in the three years 1836, 37, 38, *i. e.* 17 in a year. This exemption, in the case of these towns, is certainly of many years’ standing.

As a contrast, let us look for a moment at the ravages of fever in some of the Irish towns; as in Dublin, where the number of fever cases admitted into one hospital (in Cork Street) was 24,000 in ten years *preceding* 1817, and the whole numbers admitted into the different hospitals, in 21 months of 1817–18, was 39,000; or in Cork, where “one-seventh of the population *passed through the different fever hospitals* of the city in the two years 1817–18;” or in Limerick, where it was estimated, “and I believe with good reason, that one-fourth of the inhabitants sickened of the fever” in the same year; or in Waterford, where “the sufferers from fever in those years cannot be reckoned at less than one-ninth of the whole population; while, in the part of the

\* Cowan’s Vital Statistics, p. 11.

city named the Carrigeen, inhabited by the poorest and most miserable classes, there are good grounds for believing, that at least nineteen out of twenty persons suffered from the fever ; and in Murphy's Lane, containing sixty houses, every inhabitant had an attack of fever within two months ;" or in Strabane, where " it appears, from very accurate returns, that nearly one-fourth of the inhabitants were affected with the disease, of whom somewhat more than the average died ;" and let us remember the observation everywhere made, that " the poor were uniformly the greatest sufferers, and fever seemed to rage among them in proportion to the sufferings they had endured ;" that " the disease was most destructive in those parts of the country where the poor had least intercourse with the rich ;" and that, in several districts, even in those times, where " great exertions were made to relieve the poor, and a large sum of money expended in procuring the necessaries of life, there the epidemic never raged to any great extent."\*

The following extracts from the last Report which I have received, of the House of Recovery and Fever Hospital in Cork Street, Dublin, by Dr G. A. Kennedy, shew both how fever holds its ground in that city, and how generally the experience of medical men leads them to ascribe its prevalence to the destitution and sufferings of a population unprotected by the law.

Average annual number of applications to that Fever Hospital, for 5 years, ending 1836, 5297.

Number in 1837, 9508, of which it appears that 8192 were admitted.

Total number of fever cases treated in the different Dublin Hospitals in 1837, 12,634.

In the latter year, in reporting to the Government on the causes of the existing prevalence of fever, the physicians of the Fever Hospital in Cork Street, thus express themselves :— " These do not differ in any respect, so far as is known to them, from the causes of former epidemics, already fully discussed, and set forth in various reports, presented to the Committee and to the public. The physicians have scarcely ever observed those *circumstances which favour the progress of epidemic disease*, more strikingly exhibited than at present. They have frequently seen from ten to twenty individuals crowded into a single apartment of small dimensions, ill ventilated, filthy, and offensive in the highest degree, the inmates in want of the necessaries of life, often without bed-covering, or even sufficient personal clothing."†

\* Barker and Cheyne, vol. ii. pp. 16, 26, 40, 122, 166.

† Medical Report of the House of Recovery, &c. Dublin, 1839, pp. 3, 5, and 41.

When we shall see similar statements in regard to the general extension of fever among the English poor, and the circumstances of those among whom it spreads, as I have quoted from the Irish records, then, and not till then, I shall believe that the system of legal relief, which has been in force there for 250 years, tends ultimately to an increase of their destitution and suffering.

Thus, the existence of epidemic fever in any great community, particularly if there be neither war nor famine to explain it, becomes a most important test to the legislator of the destitute condition of the poor, and, as I shall endeavour to shew, of the deficiency of the funds which, in a better regulated state, are applied to their support.

I presume it will not be denied that the ordinary diet, and all the comforts of the lowest orders of society, in those English towns which are so little liable to fever, are much better than in Scotland; and that in Ireland, where the disposition to fever is strongest and most constant, the diets and comforts of the lowest class of people are habitually the worst. The simple fact of the habitual *cleanliness* of the English poor, as compared either with the Scotch or Irish, is sufficient evidence on this point. That there are differences in nations, as in individuals, in this last respect, independently of their differences in other comforts, is admitted; but that the lower ranks of a whole people should be habitually cleanly, and yet much impoverished,—or should be habitually destitute, and preserve any habits of cleanliness, may be fairly asserted to be moral impossibilities. The Chief Secretary of Ireland, in describing to Parliament the great epidemic fever of Ireland in 1819, expressed a hope “that the lower Irish would be better prepared in future, to guard against such a calamity; that they would be more cleanly in their persons and domestic habits, fumigate their houses, and change their bedding and clothes.” This really recalls the remark of the French princess, who expressed her astonishment that any of her father’s subjects should not have lived on bread and cheese, rather than have died of famine. A medical observer of the disease, more practically acquainted with the poor Irish, observes with perfect justice: “It may be asked, ‘How can those wretched beings, scarcely able to procure a ‘meal’s meat,’ be expected to be more cleanly in their domestic habits; or how can they, who have scarcely a rag to cover them, and who are obliged, for want of bed-clothes, to sleep under the raiment they wear by day, ‘change their bedding and clothes?’ Before we can be justified in using such language towards the poor of Ireland, we must remove the causes of their poverty, and then allow half a century to eradicate the bad habits of ages.”\*

\* Harty’s Sketch of the Contagious Fever, &c. p. 219.

Even independently of the disposition which is given to fever by the destitute condition of the poor in our large towns, it is generally admitted that the want of sufficient nourishment, and sufficient clothing, their irregular and precarious subsistence, and their occasional intemperate habits (which I believe to be the natural result of such a mode of life), are the fruitful sources of many other diseases which continually afflict them, and embitter and shorten their existence. And even independently of disease, the comfortless state of a great part of the population, especially of those who are unable for active employment, and are farthest removed from intercourse with the higher orders, is, in many instances, such as to make it incumbent, as I think, on those who deprecate any improvement in it, to point out distinctly what benefit is conferred on the community by its being kept in its present state. The following is a true picture: "The female field-labourers (very numerous here, as in every town in Scotland), when employed, earn only eightpence a-day, and are unable to provide anything for the future. Accordingly, ceasing to be fit for work about the age of fifty, they inevitably become destitute, and depend for the remainder of their lives on the charity of their neighbours or parochial allowance. The number of such poor women, in almost every small town in Scotland, is distressing to think upon. Though unfit for active exertions, they have a tenacity of life which usually carries them through many years of extreme penury. Habitual piety gives them resignation, sometimes even cheerfulness, but this ought not to blind any enlightened or humane inquirer to the real nature of their situation. *The fact is, they live in a condition to which that of most domestic animals is a luxury.* The parish rarely offers to such persons more than a shilling a-week. Individuals occasionally give them some scraps, but this succour is very trifling. Their mode of life is often altogether a mystery, nothing like the usually understood means of maintaining life being found as within their reach. The only chance of such persons seems to be an acute illness, for then some little attention is paid them. But generally this is not the nature of their ailments. They have lingering complaints, the consequence of poorness of living, generally quite incurable; and thus they linger on from year to year, in a state very nearly parallel to that of the worn-out male labourers, till death puts an end to their sufferings.\*"

I think such facts must induce every man of reflection who witnesses them, to ask himself two questions:—1. Is it a part of the general plan of Providence, against which it is in vain to contend, that so large a portion of our fellow-creatures should habitually undergo such an amount of suffering; and, 2. Is it rea-

\* Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, February 16. 1839.

sonable to expect that any religious or moral instruction can permanently engage the attention, or influence the conduct, of people who, especially during youth, are so situated? To both these questions I humbly apprehend that the answer should be in the negative.

That it is a part of the dispensations of Providence, that much poverty should exist in every human community, is indeed as obvious as that a seed of evil has been implanted in every human breast; and no one who has been accustomed to observe the comparative enjoyments of the different ranks of society, will ever regard a man as an object of compassion merely because he is poor. The inquiries and reflections of modern philosophers have enabled us to understand distinctly the natural principles which uniformly and continually work out the accomplishment of the Divine Word, that "the poor shall never cease out of the land." But the same Scripture which tells us of the continued existence of poverty, tells us also of the duty of Charity; and if we find that not only poverty, but sufferings resulting from poverty, are regularly increasing in any place, or at any time,—if we find that what is done by the rich is less effectual in relieving the sufferings of the poor there than elsewhere, and that many social evils exist which are elsewhere comparatively unknown, it is obvious that that great duty is not performed, unless the causes of the difference are carefully investigated, and the proper remedies applied. "If the intellectual powers," says an amiable writer, "be worth the pains of cultivation, if one object of man's study be preferable to another, it must be with the view of diminishing general misery, and extending general happiness."

It appears from what has been said, that, as the number of destitute poor in Edinburgh has increased, the exertions of the institutions for the relief of poverty, *combined with sickness*, have been proportionally and greatly augmented. The funds for several of these institutions, however, viz. the Infirmary and Dispensaries, are, in a great measure, supplied by the students of Medicine who come from a distance. The institutions for the relief of *indigence alone*, of persons out of employment, of widows and orphans, of the aged or permanently disabled poor, have certainly not extended their operations in nearly the same proportion. The House of Refuge is the only recently established institution which holds out relief to such persons; and in so far as it does not act merely as an auxiliary workhouse to the parishes, its funds have very considerably declined.\* The only other in-

\* Between 1836 and 1839 (*i. e.* just during the continuance of the epidemic fever) its income from subscriptions and donations fell from L.859 to L.657, and its "miscellaneous receipts" from L.342 to L.78.

stitution which holds out the prospect of relief to such persons, is the Benevolent and Strangers' Friend Society, which commenced in 1815. This society, however, is chiefly intended for the benefit of strangers from a considerable distance. It raises annually, with considerable difficulty, about L.360, of which about L.280 are expended on the poor.\*

On the other hand, the Society for the Suppression of Beggars, which, twenty-five years ago, had subscriptions to the amount of above L.600 a-year, after contracting its operations very considerably, has discontinued them entirely within the last few years, on the understanding, that the objects of its bounty (whose number had become trifling) would receive assistance from the two other institutions last mentioned.

Neither have the sums raised and expended in the way of legal relief to the poor undergone any increase, in proportion to the increase of destitution of which I have given evidence. The assessment in the city parishes was indeed raised from 5 to 6 per cent. on the rental in 1831, but part of this increase was required for the payment of debt; and the expenditure on the poor, which was above L.9000 in 1825,† is stated at L.9010 : 10 : 3, on an average of the years 1835–36–37.‡ An increased assessment for these parishes was proposed in the beginning of the year by the Managers of the Charity Workhouse, as, in their opinion, quite necessary for the relief of the poor, but refused by the Town-Council, who are the legal guardians of the poor in this as in other royal burghs in Scotland.

In like manner, when it was proposed very lately at one of the meetings of the managers of the poor in the West Church parish (which, although suburban, comprises 70,000 of the inhabitants of Edinburgh) to raise the assessment in that parish which is 11d. in the pound, or a little more than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., to 1s., and to appropriate the additional amount exclusively to widows and orphans, the proposal was rejected by a large majority.

Soup-kitchens have been repeatedly opened during the most inclement winters, for the assistance of the most distressed part of the population (generally when there was much apprehension of contagious diseases extending from them to the higher ranks), but have always excited much dissatisfaction among many influential persons, and the assistance given by them has been discontinued whenever the weather improved.

Thus it appears, that in Edinburgh (and I believe the same

\* See its Report for 1838.

† See Abstract of Receipt and Expenditure of the Edinburgh Charity Workhouse for that year, by George Spankie, Treasurer.

‡ See Report of the Committee of the General Assembly on the Poor in Scotland, p. 2.

holds of other large towns in Scotland), while there has been much disposition to relieve the *sick poor*, there has been a very general discouragement of institutions for the relief of *mere poverty*,—of the unemployed poor, the aged or permanently disabled poor, and the widows and orphans of the poor. The whole sum applied to these purposes is much smaller than in all the English towns. The kind of assistance to the poor, which all medical men know to be of the utmost importance for the *prevention* of many of their most formidable diseases, has been as much as possible withheld.

The reason is, that, during the whole time to which I have been alluding, the general impression and belief among the most influential persons who have presided over the public charities in Scotland has been, that all legal provision for the poor is a great evil; and it has even been a very prevalent opinion (and, as it appears to me, a perfectly just opinion, if the arguments against the legal provision be really well founded), that all private charity, intended merely for the relief of indigence, independently of disease, is of very doubtful public advantage; very easily carried to excess, probably carried to excess in Edinburgh itself, and when so, “breaking down the spirit of independence among the poor,” and rapidly multiplying the objects of charity. It cannot be denied, that this has been the prevailing impression, on which it has been thought wise to act as rigidly as possible, during the time that the deterioration of the condition of the poor in Edinburgh, of which I have given evidence, has been going on.

The general belief has been, that the religious and moral education of the poor should be the main object of the assistance given them by the higher ranks, and that if that object be duly accomplished, the poor are most benefited by being left to themselves; when their own prudence and foresight, strengthened by the religious and moral feelings which have been inculcated in them, will form the best security against the evils of poverty. The fear of weakening the prudence and foresight of the poor by teaching them to rely on legal relief, has been, probably not the sole motive, but certainly the ostensible plea, of the “characteristic distinction of the system established in Scotland for the maintenance of the poor, viz. that it places its main reliance on the voluntary contributions of the public, and never imposes a compulsory assessment, so long as hopes can be reasonably entertained of procuring without it the needful assistance.”\* “The old system” of church collections and voluntary contributions to raise the only funds for the legal relief of the poor, “still pre-

\* Report by a Committee of the General Assembly on the Management of the Poor in Scotland, 1839, p. 4. &c.



vails over the greater part of Scotland. The people in general are persuaded of its expediency, and, with very few exceptions, are anxious to preserve it." The wisdom of this plan of raising the funds even for the legal or parochial relief of the poor, in preference to assessment, was asserted by the late Mr Stewart, although not confidently, in his Lectures on Political Economy. I have heard two of his most illustrious colleagues in the University of Edinburgh, men of undoubted benevolence, express themselves more strongly to the same effect,—one saying, that he thought no greater curse could befall a country than the establishment of a legal provision for its poor; and the other, that, if he could dispose of the charitable institutions in Scotland, he would abolish them all, except Hospitals and Dispensaries, and leave the poor, unless when afflicted with disease, entirely to their own resources. I need hardly say that nearly the same doctrine has been zealously espoused by our present illustrious Professor of Divinity.\* When such sentiments are expressed by men of great and deserved moral influence, we cannot be surprised to find that they are habitually acted upon by practical men,—that the members of the College of Justice should have steadily refused to waive the privilege which exempts them from assessment for the relief of the poor, and thereby reduced the rental liable to assessment in the city parishes, for that purpose, by about one-fifth, viz. from L.205,000 to L.165,000 per annum;† that many who subscribe to Hospitals and Dispensaries, and the building of churches and the support of schools, should decline, even although not assessed, to subscribe to any other institutions for the relief of the poor; and even that many respectable citizens should never appear among the subscribers to any public charity, at the same time that they steadily withstand all solicitations for private alms, and thus reduce the practice of this Christian duty to the utmost possible simplicity.

In like manner, it is not surprising, when such sentiments are generally prevalent, that the Town-Council of Edinburgh, and the Managers of the West Church Charity-Workhouse, should have refused, even last winter, at the time when epidemic fever was alarmingly prevalent, to order the increased assessments which were proposed. In both instances, these guardians of the

\* So strongly has the opinion of the injurious effects of relieving poverty, and of the importance of teaching the poor to depend on their own resources, taken hold of the "public mind" in Edinburgh, that those who appear to feel much anxiety about their sufferings, seem to be usually regarded as well-meaning, weak-minded men, who are incapable of comprehending the "principle of population," and do not understand that the sufferings of one part of the community are the proper corrective to restrain the tendency to undue increase of numbers in the rest.

† See Report of Committee of General Assembly, &c: Appendix, No. 8.

poor must have been perfectly aware, that the boon, if granted, would have very materially relieved the sufferings of many helpless women and children; but they were impressed with the belief, founded on the strong assertions of so many influential men, that they would thereby ultimately extend and perpetuate the kind of suffering which they would temporarily relieve. And I believe that their fellow-citizens acting on the same impressions, have generally approved their conduct.\* I make no charge against the humanity of these gentlemen, but I think their opinion very erroneous, and its practical consequences very injurious, for reasons to be presently stated.

Of the spirit in which the Poor-Laws are executed in Scotland, and of the temper with which their execution is regarded by the rate-payers (in consequence, as I believe, of the general prevalence of that opinion), the following extracts will afford sufficient evidence.

The first is from a communication made to me by Captain Thomson, the Treasurer, and most efficient Manager, of the House of Refuge. "I have frequent, almost daily, occasion to observe the apathy, indifference, and total disregard of the poor-laws manifested on the part of parish functionaries towards persons having claims on them for relief. The grand object kept in view by almost every parish is the possibility of *evading* the duty of relieving the poor. The point most earnestly sought after by them is not whether there is a certain amount of pauperism, calling for an equally definite amount of relief, but what is the smallest practicable amount which they can possibly be obliged to give. No distinction is made between pauperism produced by improvidence and by inevitable misfortune. The managers of the poor of a parish will bury the father and mother of a family, and never inquire after the orphans. I have seen melancholy instances of this, and there is at least one in the Refuge at present."

\* The argument chiefly urged in the Town-Council was, that wherever poor-laws had been introduced they had been found ultimately to lead to an increase of poverty and suffering; a statement which I shall afterwards endeavour to shew to be almost exactly the reverse of the truth. At present I shall only state as a commentary on it, that in the *non-assessed* parish in Scotland, where the proportion of the poor's funds to the population is probably the smallest (£3 per annum to 2275 persons), the minister states, that were the funds of greater amount *it would be necessary to admit on the roll three times as many paupers* as are actually on it. See Report by Committee of General Assembly, p. 15. At the meeting of the West Church Managers, Mr Gifford argued, that an increased allowance to widows and orphans "would introduce the *worst principles* of the old English Poor-Law, which had risen to such a height that the Legislature had been obliged to put it down;"—apparently not being aware that one of the objects, and, according to the Reports of the Commissioners, one of the results of the English Poor-Law Amendment Act was to *increase* the comforts allowed to the truly impotent poor. See Report of Commissioners for 1838, p. 73.

The second is from a note in the List of Pensioners in the Edinburgh Charity Workhouse, lately published, and which is signed by Dr Wallace (Emeritus Professor of Mathematics) and Mr Ridpath. It shews what is the amount of relief to the aged and disabled poor, which many citizens of Edinburgh censure as profuse waste of money, and as an encouragement to intemperance. "It has been confidently asserted, in newspapers and at public meetings, that there is a profuse waste of money by carelessness of management, and that the poor are thereby provided with the means of indulging in the vice of intemperance. No. 1. in the table shews, that a widow, eighty-one years of age, has an allowance of sixty pence for forty-two days, *i. e.* about three halfpence per day. No. 3. shews, that another widow, aged eighty-five, receives only forty-eight pence for the same time. The whole table shews how frugally the public money is doled out to the children of poverty. The *unrelieved distress* can only be understood by those who perform the painful duty of considering the cases. It may be safely affirmed, that, *but for the aid given by the suffering poor to one another*, the large sum levied in Edinburgh by assessment would be utterly insufficient to support all the poor that *barely exist*."

In all these cases, I beg it may be remembered, that it is to the *theory* which makes men think it wise and expedient thus to curtail the allowances to the poor, and then to close their eyes on the consequences, that my objections are directed. I know that it is often very painful to the feelings of those engaged in this duty to be thus limited in their power of relieving suffering. Two of the gentlemen now so engaged in the Charity Workhouse, used the same expression to me, that it was *heart-rending* to them to see so much misery, which they had no means of relieving.

It may readily be supposed that I do not set myself in opposition to an opinion which has been maintained by so many of those to whom I have always looked with feelings of the highest respect, without reluctance, without repeated reflection on the grounds of my own opinion, and diffidence as to my power of convincing others. Even independently of the authority of such men, I am aware that almost every Scotchman who has "made up his faggot of opinions," has included in it a general belief (in many instances, I believe, perfectly well founded), that the civil institutions of his own country are superior to those of England, and on that account will be unwilling to relinquish the idea, that the Scotch principle is the right system of national charity, and the English the wrong one.

But "*Magna est veritas et prævalebit.*" I should be an unworthy disciple of those men to whom I have alluded, if I could

hesitate to avow my conviction of what, after deliberate inquiry, I believe to be the truth, out of deference to their authority ; or if I could doubt for a moment that truth and reason will gradually make their way, even when opposed by high authority, by general prejudice, and by a natural (although, I believe, mistaken) idea of individual pecuniary interest.

I do not hesitate, therefore, to express my firm conviction, in which I am so far supported by the opinion, not only of most recent English authors, but of the late Dr Andrew Thomson, of Dr Stevenson M'Gill, and of Mr M'Culloch, that the objections which are so strongly felt in this country against a compulsory provision for the poor, are found, by extensive experience, to be absolutely and fundamentally erroneous ; that, in a complex state of society, such as exists in this and all other great towns, there is no other way in which the lower ranks can be permanently preserved from an extremity of suffering which no Christian can contemplate without horror, and which I cannot but think it was one great object of the Christian dispensation to avert ; and that there is no reasonable prospect of permanent improvement in the condition of the poor in this country, without an absolute and unqualified rejection of the dogma, that the duty of the rich to the poor is performed by giving them a religious and moral education, and supporting medical charities for them, when they are afflicted with disease. If the system of discouraging and repressing the claims on charity of *indigence, independently of disease*, be much longer acted on, I have no doubt that the condition of the poor in our great towns in Scotland will soon become as miserable as it has long been in Ireland ; and, as a natural consequence, that we may expect to have, as they have had in Dublin, frequently-recurring epidemic fevers, each extending, as it has done there, to a fourth of the population, or, as in Glasgow or Dundee, to a sixth, instead of a twentieth, or at most a fifteenth part as heretofore with us. I am farther of opinion, that the principles on which the relief of the poor is now administered in England, are infinitely preferable to those which are generally followed in Scotland ; and I have no doubt that the English people receive a temporal reward for their more humane and merciful management of the poor, in the comparative exemption of most of their great towns from the curse of contagious fever.

I do not, however, know that it is necessary, in order that the provision for the poor in Scotland should be made such as I think it ought to be, that the English law should be introduced here. Probably the law of Scotland, *if equally enforced and administered in the same spirit*, would answer the same purposes ; but in order that this may be, it seems to me to be quite essential that all who are charged with the administration of the

poor laws, in all parts of Scotland, should cease to regard them as an evil; and should look on them rather as an eloquent English author has done, who says, "The humanity which it was designed by the original text of the main statute on this subject, to infuse into the law of the land, is the page of mercy in a book which has to deal much of necessity in severer things; and there is a spirit of kindness in it, particularly fitted to recommend the whole authority of law, as a system framed for the well-being of its subjects. I would as soon see the best clause of Magna Charta erased from the volume of our liberties, as this primary authentic text of humane legislation from our statute-book. And if, in the course of a remote time, the establishments of liberty and of humanity which we now possess are to leave us, and the spirit of them to be carried to other lands, I trust this one record of them will survive, and that *charity by law* will be a fragment of English history, to be preserved wherever the succession of our constitution or religion shall go."

There are two fallacies, pervading much of what is usually said in this country as to the English system of the Poor Laws, which it is of great importance to explain; because it is very generally assumed in this country (as I humbly apprehend very erroneously), not only that the English Poor Laws have become infected with abuses, but that their general and ultimate effect has been, to increase the destitution and sufferings of the people.

1. When it is stated that, under the English system of Poor Rates, *pauperism* has increased, until the paupers amounted, some time since, to nearly 10 per cent. on the whole population, even if that assertion were strictly correct (as it is not), it would conceal the fact, that certain abuses of the system, which have been within the last half century engrafted on the original plan, are mixed up with the system itself. It had become the practice, before the introduction of the Poor-Law Amendment Bill, not only to grant relief to able-bodied men, without any adequate test of their destitution, but to pay out of the Poor Rates, part of the wages of a great proportion of the regularly employed labourers in many parts of England,—the employers of labourers having dexterously shifted on the rate payers a great part of the burden which they only were bound to bear. In both these particulars, it is quite obvious, that there had been a departure from the original intention of Poor Laws, which never were intended either to maintain persons not really unable to procure employment, or to relieve the employers of workmen of any part of the payment due to their labourers. No one can doubt, that there is a real and positive tendency to maintain a redundant population in such an administration of Poor Laws, as maintains in idleness able-

bodied men who can procure work if they please. But when we strike off from the list of paupers (as in fact has now been done in most parts of England) all those who have regular employment in their power, we shall find the assertion, that Poor Laws necessarily lead to a continual increase of pauperism, quite destitute of foundation. We cannot have better evidence on this subject than that of Mr Revans, who was Secretary to the Poor-Law Inquiry in England and Wales, which led to the Amendment Act in 1834, and who tells us, that if we deduct the payment of wages through the poor rates since 1796, and allow for the difference of population, and of the price of corn, and for the better provision, "which it became safe to give to the destitute as the condition of the labouring classes improved, and for the many extraneous expenses which have during the last century been charged on the poor rates (such as the costs of prosecutions and population returns), we shall find that they had pretty well reached their greatest height in 1680." "I am strongly of opinion," he adds, "that the *proportion of the population receiving parish relief had not increased during the century ending in 1790.*"

To the same purpose Mr Sadler has shewn, by reference to the best authorities, that the Parliamentary returns on which Malthus and others had relied were very erroneous, and that the expressions of Sir Frederick Eden, written at the end of last century, were perfectly justified by fact, "that the rise of the poor rates in England has *not* kept pace with other branches of the national expenditure, nor even with our increased ability to pay them." So far is this from being the case, that, in 1680, according to the statement of Mr Sadler, the poor rates in England were to the exports as 10 to 61, in 1780, as 10 to 58, in 1825 (before the Poor-Law Amendment Bill was introduced), as 10 to 100; in 1700, the paupers were to the population as 10 to 45; in 1760, as 10 to 96; in 1825, as 10 to 120.\* And a very well informed writer in the Quarterly Review, writing *before* the Poor-Law Amendment Bill was passed, after much inquiry, gave a decided opinion, that "the whole of the funds now actually expended on the poor (even including the very large proportion paid to able-bodied labourers, and constituting part of the wages of labour), *bears a much smaller proportion to the present resources of the country, than the total amount of contributions raised for the sustenance of the poor, bore to the whole of its wealth in the time of Elizabeth.*"† If these statements were true at the time when they were written, *a fortiori* they must be true now, because, since that time, no less than L.2,300,000 per annum have been with-

\* See Sadler's Ireland, p. 233, *et seq.* and Table at p. 245.

† Quarterly Review, No. 65.

drawn from the amount of the poor rate in England, by the operation of the new act.

Now, when it thus appears that the present amount of the poor rate and of pauperism in England bears a *less* proportion to the wealth of the country than it did 150 years ago, or even in the reign of Elizabeth, it is quite plain that its excess over that of Scotland cannot be ascribed to an increase of poverty, resulting from the operation of the law. Nor am I aware of any cause to which we are to ascribe the higher amount of the English rate, excepting only this simple one, that the standard of comforts which the English people, during the whole operation of the law, have been willing to grant to their poor, has been much higher than that adopted in Scotland.

2. When it is said that under the system of the Poor Rate in England, *pauperism* has increased, many of those who have not attended carefully to the subject are apt to suppose, that the sufferings and destitution of the poor have increased; but nothing can be farther from the truth. In the great towns, which are continually crowded with importations of the poor Irish, and often of foreigners, and in the great seats of manufactures, where the employment of the poor is liable to so great fluctuations, there is no doubt much destitution which the poor rates have only partially mitigated; but no one who has attended to the subject can doubt, that the general condition of the English poor, whether paupers or not, is very generally better than that of the poor in any country where an adequate legal relief does not exist; and infinitely better than it was before the poor rates were introduced into England. At that time, as we know from authentic documents, the peasantry throughout England were in general in a state of nearly as abject poverty as is now seen in Ireland. But at present, the description which Mr Revans gives of the English paupers is not over-coloured, when he speaks of them, in most parts of the country, as “well fed, well clothed, well housed, happy and *independent* ;” *i. e.* dependent on the law, but not on the bounty or caprice of individuals. “I was asked one day,” he continues, “by an Irishman (talking about poor laws), whether I would reduce the Irish labourer to the level of the English pauper? I need hardly say that he had never been in England. When I had explained to him the food, clothing, habitation, &c. of an English pauper, he soon perceived that no English pauper in his senses would change places with a farmer holding twenty acres of land in Ireland. I had just then returned from a visit to the *most pauperized* county in England, Kent, and been delighted with the comfortable, substantial, neat, well furnished cottages, with the good clothing, and healthy, cheerful, *independent* coun-

tenances of the inmates.”\* “The comfort of the cottages in England” (great numbers of them inhabited by paupers), says Mr Symons, “is not equalled abroad, Switzerland excepted”†—where, be it observed, a Poor Law has been long in operation, *copied from that of England.*

It must be distinctly understood, therefore, that the term pauper in England applies indeed to a person who is supported, at least partly or occasionally, from the poor rate, but by no means necessarily or generally to one who undergoes any of the sufferings of destitution. Till lately, the term was applicable to great numbers of able-bodied men and their families, in full employment, and it is still applicable to great numbers of persons who support themselves in comfort by their own industry during the greater part of the year. The examples of England and Ireland are more than enough to shew that extensive pauperism is compatible with a high degree of comfort, and the absence of pauperism with the most abject misery, in the great body of the poor. That pauperism in England does by no means imply suffering or destitution (as it too surely does in Scotland), is amply proved by the fact, that, since the Poor-Law Amendment Act came into force, L.2,300,000 per annum have been withdrawn from the funds destined for its support, without any extensive suffering having been produced,—nay, while the reports from most parts of the country describe a decided improvement in the comforts of the widows and orphans, the aged, sick, and disabled poor.

The amount of relief granted to the poor in England is now entrusted to the guardians of the poor in each union, acting at present under the directions of the Poor-Law Commissioners; and in their practical administration of the law it is easy to observe, from the Reports they have published, that there are the following essential distinctions from the system which prevails in Scotland.

1. The amount of funds raised by assessment, and expended on the relief of the poor, is very much greater in proportion to the population, than the funds, however raised, applied in that way in Scotland.

2. The system of relief is made, as nearly as possible, uniform in all parts of the country.

3. Relief is regularly given to able-bodied men and women, and their families, when it is satisfactorily shewn that they cannot procure employment.

4. Well regulated workhouses are considered an essential part of the system, and relief to the able-bodied is confined to them,

\* Evils of the State of Ireland, &c. p. 137.

† Arts and Artizans, &c. p. 86.



unless in peculiar circumstances of distress, when other "tests of destitution" are employed.

5. The giving of relief to all persons found really destitute is *enforced by law*, the relieving officers of every union being amenable to the Commissioners if they do not grant it, on complaint from any quarter, and Magistrates having the power, in the case of destitute strangers, to enforce it; and in the case of all persons wholly unable for work, to enforce it in the shape of out-door relief.\*

In all these particulars, it seems to me, that the administration of the Poor Laws in England is so greatly more favourable to the comforts of the poor, and to the health and happiness of all classes of the community, that I can hardly doubt of the disposition of many persons in Scotland to wish them to be placed on a similar footing here, if it can only be shewn that no ulterior ill consequences are to be expected.

The proportion in which the legal relief given in England exceeds that given in Scotland varies considerably. The whole population of 662 unions and parishes in England, to which the new law has been applied, is, in round numbers, 11,166,000, and the sums applied in them to relief of the poor under the new law, in 1838, were L.4,254,000.† The population of Scotland is stated by the Committee of the General Assembly at 2,315,000, and the whole sums applied to the relief of the poor, about one-half of which are raised by assessment, are L.140,496.‡

The whole funds thus applied are nearly six times as great, in proportion to the population, in England as in Scotland. The average expenditure per head on the population in England is stated in the last Report of the Commissioners to be now reduced to 5s. 10d., and in Wales to be 6s. In Scotland it is less than 1s. 4d. It is more especially important, however, with a view to the object of this paper, to attend to the comparative expenditure in some of the towns, in which the difference is not quite so great. The following table, calculated from the Fourth and Fifth Reports of the English Poor-Law Commissioners, and from the Report to the General Assembly in Scotland, gives sufficient data for the present discussion.

\* See Letter to Commissioners of Police in London from the Poor-Law Commissioners, Appendix to their 4th Report, p. 97, and Circular issued to the Unions in Lancashire, &c. Ib. p. 115.

† See 4th Report of Commissioners, &c. pp. 41 and 50.

‡ See Report by Committee of Assembly, p. 20.

District.	Population.	No. of Paupers.	Proportion.	Expenditure on Poor.	Burden on each of the Population, nearly	
				£	s.	d.
662 Unions, &c. } in England, }	11,166,000	...	...	4,254,000	7	7
Eight Counties } in England, }	1,897,099	{ 169,818 including 35,323 able-bodied }	8.9 per cent.	...	...	...
Strand Union,	42,720	1692	3.9	14,494	6	9
Holborn ditto,	42,649	2339	5.4	11,527	5	3
White Chapel, do.	64,141	5856	9.1	16,426	5	0
Bethnal Green, do.	62,018	3632	5.8	12,451	4	0
Greenwich, .	62,009	6607	10.6	15,593	5	0
Nottingham, .	50,680	...	...	18,556	7	4
(1838.)						
Cambridge, .	20,917	...	...	5,359	5	0
Bath, . . . .	64,230	...	...	12,244	3	9
Worcester, . .	26,542	...	...	5,883	4	6
Kendal, . . .	32,740	...	...	12,738	7	10
Leicester, . .	39,135	...	...	14,359	7	3
Northampton, .	21,761	...	...	7,350	6	8
Lyne Regis, .	13,370	...	...	6,683	10	0
Midhurst, . .	12,239	...	...	6,041	9	10
Gateshead, . .	31,017	...	...	9,011	5	9
Manchester,* .	142,026	...	...	46,543	6	6
Scotland, (all the assessed part), . . . }	1,137,000	39,356	3.44	91,726	1	4
City of Edin- burgh, . . . }	55,218	3.437	6.2	9,010	3	3
St Cuthbert's, .	70,889	1,409	2.	6,905	1	11
Canongate, . .	10,175	349	3.4	1,016	2	0
All Edinburgh,	136,270	5,195	3.8	16,931	2	6
Leith, . . . .	25,869	1,457	5.6	3,234	2	6
Glasgow,† . .	253,000	4,500	2.6	20,094	1	7
Dundee, . . .	45,355	3,536	7.7	4,243	1	10
Aberdeen, . .	32,900	1,407	4.2	4,006	2	5
Paisley, . . .	31,700	829	2.6	1,872	1	2
Dumfries, . .	11,600	1,126	9.7	1,279	2	2
Hawick, . . .	5,366	458	8.6	907	3	6
Selkirk, . . .	2,064	93	4.5	272	2	7
Falkirk, . . .	13,037	400	3.	624	0	11
Stirling, . . .	8,581	184	2.1	501	1	2
Alloa, . . . .	7,000	364	5.2	544	1	6
Dunfermline, .	17,286	679	3.9	951	1	1
Perth, . . . .	20,016	888	4.4	2,203	2	2
Coldstream, .	2,897	140	4.8	575	3	11

\* This information I have from my friend Dr Ainsworth.

† For this statement I am indebted to Dr Cowan; the numbers for Glasgow are not quite accurately ascertained.

From this it appears, that the expenditure on the poor under the law of Scotland is extremely irregular and capricious. In the royalty of Edinburgh it is greater than in any more northern part of Scotland, although considerably lower than the lowest which I have observed in England, viz. in Bath, where there are no manufactures, and where the poor are in less proportion to the rich than probably in any other city in the empire.

The greater number of poor in the royalty of Edinburgh is easily explained, because in that division of the town is comprised by far the largest portion of the Old Town (the High Street, Cowgate, Grassmarket, and adjoining closes), which is almost entirely inhabited by the lower orders, many of them recently from the country, but who have obtained a settlement there by three years' residence, and many of whom are employed (at least occasionally) in the adjoining parishes. It is likewise in this portion of the town especially, that the causes already mentioned as leading to a decline of the demand for labour in Edinburgh, have taken effect; it is here that the partially employed and disabled poor from country parishes struggle to obtain a settlement; and it is here that there has been the great mortality from fever. It is a striking proof of the general prevalence in Edinburgh of the very mistaken opinion (as I conceive) of the necessarily injurious operation of a poor rate, that a large portion of the best informed of the inhabitants of this most heavily burdened portion of the city, should think that they do a service to the country by maintaining the privilege which exempts them from any assessment for the poor.

The only fair way to judge of the amount of legal provision for the poor in Edinburgh, is to include St Cuthbert's parish and the Canongate in the calculation; and the amount of the expenditure on the poor then appears to be 2s. 6d. a-head on the population, certainly not half the average expenditure of the English towns on their poor. In most of the other Scotch towns,—including Glasgow, Dundee, and Paisley, it will be seen that the expenditure on the poor is less than 2s. a-head on the population, *i. e.* not a third of the usual expenditure in England under the New Poor Law. In Perth and Aberdeen the expenditure is higher than this, and in the Border districts, as at Hawick and Coldstream, it is higher than in the Royalty of Edinburgh.

Again, the allowances granted in the way of out-door relief to aged and disabled persons, widows, and orphans, are in general hardly more than half what are usually granted to the same description of persons in England. Thus, the highest provision granted to a pauper in the city of Edinburgh or in Glasgow (even to a widow with a family) is L.4, 16s. and L.5 a-year,\*

\* Report of Committee of General Assembly, pp. 2 and 45.

less than 2s. in the week, and the usual pension to a single disabled man or woman is about 1s. a-week; whereas in England (as I find by answers to queries from London, Oxford, Bath, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Newcastle, and Carlisle) a widow with four children has from 4s. to 7s. a-week, (reckoning a quartern loaf at 8d.) and an aged or disabled man or woman has from 2s. to 4s.

Again, in all Scotland there are *only four workhouses*, three in Edinburgh and its suburbs, and one in Paisley; whereas in England 587 unions had been formed in May 1839, each provided with its workhouse.

That the sums applied to the relief of indigence in Scotland are also much less than has been practically found necessary in other countries, where there are equally large towns, in order to preserve the poor in tolerable comfort, and repress mendicity, appears from the following statement of the amount of legal provision for them in a few places from which we have accurate statements, to be afterwards more particularly noticed.

In Hamburgh, the amount of regular *out-door* relief granted to the poor, amounts to nearly 4s. a-head on the population.

Throughout Holland, the annual expenditure on the poor, virtually enforced by the law, is about L.500,000 a-year, in a population less than that of Scotland, or 4s. 4d. a-head on the entire population, while the value of money there is higher than here; and the proportion of the population so assisted is often more than 10 per cent.

In those towns of France, where the public provision for the poor is well organized, it amounts to L.1,800,000 per annum, on a population of 3,500,000, *i. e.* nearly 10s. a-head on the population.

In Venice, a town which has suffered much from decline of trade, the sums expended on the poor, under the beneficent rule of Austria, have been lately about L.100,000 on a population of 112,000, of whom from 47,000 to 50,000 have been thus supported; *i. e.* the paupers have been 45 per cent. of the people, and the sum expended on them fully 18s. a-head on the population.

In Philadelphia, as early as 1803, the poor rate amounted to L.15,000 on a population of 67,000, *i. e.* nearly 4s. 6d. a-head; and in 1820 it amounted to 28,000 in a population of 113,000, or very nearly 5s. per head.

It is true, that in several of these cases (although not in England) the legal provision for the poor covers the expenses of the hospitals; but in most of them there exist various voluntary charitable establishments, besides the legal provision. And we cannot reckon the hospitals in Scotland a heavy burden on the

community, a large proportion of their expense (in Edinburgh by far the largest proportion) being defrayed either by endowments or by the students of medicine.

It would be presumption in me to offer an opinion with confidence on the details of the Amended Poor Law of England, as compared with the old law ; and in different writings on the subject, the expression, principle of the new poor law, seems to be very variously used. There are three principles, however, which are obviously involved in its provisions, *first*, that the payment of part of the wages of able-bodied labourers out of the poor's rate be abandoned ; *secondly*, that workhouses be provided in all the unions of parishes, and the relief of the able-bodied, when out of work, be in general given in them only ; and, *thirdly*, that, for a time, the administration of the whole relief to the poor throughout the country shall be under the control of a central board, so as to render the system every where as uniform as possible. All these provisions seem to me to be perfectly reasonable and judicious ; and the clamour which has been raised against some of them I would regard only as one of the best proofs that can be given of a fact to which I shall afterwards advert, viz. that the existence of a legal provision for the poor,—fixing at a proper standard the ideas of the higher orders as to what ought to be their condition and comforts,—strengthens rather than weakens the feeling of benevolence and sympathy with which they are regarded by their superiors. It is right to add, that, so far as can be judged from the Reports of the Commissioners, and papers accompanying them, the changes introduced by the new law seem to have been carried into effect with much judgment, temper, and humanity.

On the other hand, I have no difficulty in saying, that the prospects which were held out by some of the advocates of the Poor-Law Amendment Bill at the time of its introduction, that by means of it the poor might gradually be brought to such a state of wisdom and prudence, as to adapt their numbers exactly to the demand for their services, and to the means of their subsistence, and ultimately to require no assistance from the higher ranks excepting in sickness,—are quite Utopian and visionary ; and that any attempt to reduce them to practice, while human nature remains as it is, will be found to lead only to misery and disorder.

I take the liberty of observing farther, that I think the prospect which is held out of ultimately confining nearly *all* the legal relief to that given in workhouses, cannot be realized without serious injury to the lower classes, particularly to two great classes of the poor, widows with orphans, and partially disabled men with families ; who, when of good character, seem to me to

be the fittest objects of out-door relief. I venture to prophesy, that if that rule were to be generally acted on in such cases, its evil effects would soon appear in a gradually increasing liability in the great towns to epidemic and contagious fever.

I am quite aware, that there are many persons who consider this question as merely one of pounds, shillings, and pence; and think *that* the best system for the relief of the poor, which draws the smallest sums from the pockets of the rich,—gives the least disturbance to the tranquillity of their enjoyments,—and most expeditiously removes from their sight the “nuisance of street-begging.” That such persons are grievously mistaken as to the ultimate result of such a system on the happiness and prosperity of all ranks of a nation, will, I think, appear distinctly from facts to be afterwards stated. But at present I do not address myself to such men. They will find their tastes consulted by many other authors. I address myself to those who have been accustomed to look upon the poor, not as objects of disgust or aversion, but as brothers and sisters in affliction, who are born to the same hopes as themselves, look up to the same Father in heaven; and trust to the mediation of the same Redeemer; to those who remember that charity is the highest of Christian duties, and that “our Saviour himself chose to be a beggar, that we, for his sake, might not despise the poor.” Such men will not be content, in comparing the laws and customs of different nations, with inquiring what is the *cost* of the poor; but will first inquire, what is the *condition* of the poor? and if they find that it is decidedly and *permanently* better in other countries than in their own, they will feel it to be their duty to do what they can to secure, for the humblest classes of their own fellow-citizens, the same benefits which they see conferred upon others.

When it is proposed to raise the assessments for the poor in Scotland, so as to put them more nearly on a footing with the present system in England, the question which such men will naturally put, and to which they have a perfect right to demand a satisfactory answer, is simply this: Is it, or is it not, reasonable to expect, as we have been confidently assured by many, that the benefits immediately conferred on the poor by such a step will be followed by an increase of poverty and misery, and demand an increased provision in future, which will be beyond our power? The immediate benefit is certain, and the duty imposed by it obvious and undeniable; the ultimate injury is matter of opinion: if it can be clearly established, it is a sufficient ground for withholding the relief that is in our power; but the *onus probandi* rests with those who assert it.

When we find it so confidently stated, as we often do in this country, as an established principle, that a public provision for

the poor extends the evils it is intended to relieve; and when, therefore, magistrates and managers of the poor think themselves entitled to credit, just in proportion as they can economise the allowances to the poor, we should always ask ourselves, *what are the evils* which such provision is intended to relieve? I apprehend they are simply, the sufferings of destitution, and the necessity of mendicity; and if it be asserted, that these evils are greatest where a public and legal provision for the poor exists, I will undertake to prove that the very reverse is the fact; and that these evils, in a long inhabited country, are never effectually controlled otherwise than by a systematic provision for the poor, carried to a much greater extent than it is in Scotland.

On the other hand, when we are told that it is a national object to avoid the evils of pauperism, if we are not to take fright at a mere form of words, we must ask ourselves what are those evils? If we are careful to distinguish the results of pauperism, on the one hand, from the evils of destitution which it is intended to relieve, and, on the other hand, from certain abuses which have attached themselves to the management of paupers in certain countries, but which are already corrected in England, and which no one wishes to introduce into Scotland, I think it easy to prove that these evils exist only in imagination.

I shall first endeavour, however, to state, as distinctly as I can, what I understand to be the arguments against an increased legal provision for the poor, and what seem to me to be satisfactory answers to them.

I believe I shall use no arguments on this subject which are not to be found, more or less distinctly stated, in some other authors; but, as I differ from the reasonings of several authors who come to nearly the same practical conclusions, and as I know no author whose statements and reasonings seem to me quite satisfactory, I shall not think it necessary to refer to any.

I. The first, and by far the most formidable, of all arguments against Poor-Laws, is that drawn from their alleged effect on the principle of population. Mr Malthus and the economists maintain, that the natural tendency of the human species is to increase and multiply in a geometrical progression, while the food of a man, in any country, can only be made to increase in an arithmetical progression; that, therefore, in every country which has been long inhabited, the population must necessarily press on the means of subsistence, and that it is prevented from increasing beyond these limits only by the *positive* checks of vice and misery, or by the *preventive* check of moral restraint. So far, his reasoning seems to me to be perfectly sound and irrefragable; and for the satisfactory illustrations which he has given of the natural

tendency of population to outstrip the means of subsistence,—of its rapid progress in new and improving countries,—of the checks imposed on it, more or less directly, by the gradually increasing difficulty of procuring subsistence as society advances,—and of the latent power, in all long inhabited countries, of quickly repairing the injury done by any cause of unusual mortality, he deserves immortal honour. It seems to me, not only that these principles are perfectly just, but that they must form the basis of all legitimate speculation and reasoning on the subject of poverty, its evils and remedies. In particular, we may learn from them how little is to be trusted to occasional increase of employment in a long peopled country, or to an increased supply of food, whether by the corn trade or any other means, as a remedy for the evils of poverty. Any increased power which may thus be given to such a country to support the human race will be very speedily satiated, and then the population, somewhat more *numerous*, will, *cæteris paribus*, be just as *redundant* as before. It is from improvement of the *habits* of the people only, that we can look for any permanent alleviation of the evils which the principle of population, as explained by Malthus, necessarily involves; and to this I would add, it is by *experience* only that we can learn, with certainty, in what circumstances this improvement is to be expected.

We must always keep in mind, that, in every long established country, there exists a power, continually urging the population beyond the limits of comfortable subsistence, and capable, at any time, of carrying it far beyond those limits. We must consider it as inevitable, that, in any such country, the population must be more or less *excessive*; there must be more labourers than are absolutely required in every line of industry; and the mode in which these will generally be arranged will naturally be, that, in every line, there will be some fully employed, and others, whose employment is only occasional. Farther, we must always remember, that only a portion of the human race are fitted by nature to be productive labourers in any department; that, dependent on every such labourer, there are necessarily other individuals,—women, children, aged and disabled persons,—fitted for little or no productive labour; that the capacities, physical and moral, even of the productive labourers, are very various; and that many of them become prematurely disabled or perish, before their offspring are fitted for occupying their places. Thus, widows and orphans, aged and impotent persons, become a burden on human industry, even from the earliest periods of society. It is farther to be remembered, that, as any country advances in civilization, great towns are uniformly formed in it, which as uniformly become the “graves of the human race;” in which all the



efforts of human science have been unable to prevent a great increase of mortality in the early and middle periods of life, and, therefore, of an unproductive and burdensome population.

We must consider it, then, as a part of the general dispensations of Providence, and a natural effect of the procreative power which has been granted to our species, as compared with the conditions on which human life is supported, that, in every long inhabited and civilized country, there exists a fluctuating *surplus population*, consisting partly of persons whose services are not required at all for any lines of profitable industry, there existing, partly of persons whose services are only occasionally required, and partly of persons who are unable, from age or infirmity, to render any service, and the labour of whose relatives is also insufficient for their support. In the great towns of every such country, this surplus population, and particularly this lost portion of it, will always be the greatest. This portion of the population, for whom there is inadequate employment, constitutes the poor whom "we have with us always," and who must be left to perish, or be supported in one way or another, without making an adequate return for their support. Those who suppose that all the poor, in such a country as this, can find employment sufficient for their maintenance, misunderstand the principle of population; and those who murmur at the burden imposed by the existence of a large body of unemployed or impotent poor, murmur at one of two things,—either at the general law of Providence, by which the human species can multiply in a more rapid ratio than the means of their subsistence; or else at the particular dispensation of Providence, which has placed their lot in a long inhabited and fully civilized country. They may find countries in which this burden is light in comparison with ours, but in those countries, there are comparatively few comforts, and little civilization or refinement.

We must consider it, I believe, as equally certain, that all the checks which Nature has provided for the natural tendency of the population to outstrip the increase of the means of comfortable subsistence, are included under the three heads of Vice, Suffering, and Moral Restraint;\* and that the object of all wise

\* I am quite aware of the elaborate attempt of Mr Sadler to counteract this position, and to establish a different law of population, viz. that "prolificness of human beings, otherwise similarly circumstanced, varies inversely as their numbers," and of the mass of curious and instructive statistical information which he has collected in proof of that position. But it appears to me, that the difference between his principles and those of Malthus is rather verbal than real. The great cause of the diminished fecundity of the human race in densely peopled and long cultivated countries lies in the formation of great towns, which, as is well known, cannot maintain their own population. But why is this? Simply because, in them, marriages are less prolific, as Mr Sadler has very satisfactorily shewn, and the mortality among children much

legislation must be to encourage the latter, which is the *preventive* check, as much as possible, in order that the two former, which are the *positive* checks, may come as little as possible into operation; that the main question for consideration, in all inquiries regarding the management of the poor, must always be this, In what circumstances does the principle of moral restraint act on them most powerfully? and that any mode of relieving indigence, which can be shewn to weaken that principle of moral restraint among the poor, will necessarily lead to such an increase of their numbers, as will bring them under the operation of the positive checks of vice and suffering, *i. e.* will ultimately injure, instead of alleviating, their condition.

So far, the principles of Malthus appear to me to be established facts, and just and legitimate inferences from them. But these principles being established, the practical questions remain, In what circumstances, and under what institutions, is the burden of the redundant population, whether taking the form of pauperism, or of mendicity, actually found to be the heaviest, and where are the sufferings of that part of the population the greatest? Mr Malthus goes on to state an *opinion*, that a system of poor laws, by assuring every individual in a community of subsistence, whatever may be his conduct, will naturally weaken the preventive check of moral restraint; that no prudential motives can be expected to operate to prevent early marriages in a country where such security for existence, independently of prudent conduct, is provided by law; that poor-laws, therefore, will necessarily act as a bounty on population, and their operation, gradually extending throughout the population wherever they are introduced, will ultimately generate more indigence than it will relieve; whereas, when no such provision exists, every man must see clearly before him the consequence of rearing a family without having procured for them the means of subsistence; and the moral restraint consequent on this prospect, especially if aided by general education and by special instruction on this point, is the security to which a legislature ought to look for restraining the population within the proper limits, and so preventing the evils and miseries of destitution.

greater than in the country. And if we inquire into the physical causes of these two peculiarities of the large towns, we shall find them, I apprehend, to be all resolvable into circumstances in the habits or in the constitution of the people, whether adult or children, and in the diseases to which they are liable, which come fairly under the categories enumerated by Malthus. All that can be granted to Mr Sadler is, that the evils which, coming under the heads of vice and misery, restrain the increase of population in large towns, do not necessarily afflict human nature so intensely as, from the choice of the words used to express them, might have been supposed. The term misery is certainly not generally, although frequently, applicable, and I have employed therefore the more general word suffering.

Now, this *opinion* or *conjecture* (for it is in fact nothing more) as to the effect of poor-laws on population, however plausible it may appear, I maintain to be absolutely and entirely erroneous. In order to establish it, no speculations in the closet are of any avail; neither can we take the *opinions*, even of practical men, as a ground of our judgment. It must be shewn statistically, and by actual observation of human life, that moral restraint acts efficiently as a preventive check on population, in the absence of poor laws, and that it does not act efficiently or beneficially where they exist. Until this inquiry is satisfactorily made, the principles of Malthus have no practical application in regard to poor-laws; and this inquiry he and his followers have either neglected, or wholly misapprehended its results.

*I maintain, on the other hand, that poor laws, such as exist in England, do not interfere with moral restraint; that, on the contrary, they support and strengthen it; and that moral restraint is nowhere so feeble, and population (in a long inhabited country) nowhere makes so rapid progress as where there is no regular provision for the destitute, and where, therefore, the prospect of destitution is always clear, obvious, and immediate.*

Before joining issue, however, on this fundamental question, I take the liberty of observing, that the argument of Malthus and his followers against poor laws, as being a bounty on population, applies equally against private charity, which may be, and continually is, anticipated by the poor as a resource in time of need, in like manner as a legal provision. This is admitted by Malthus himself. After inveighing against poor laws, as giving "direct, constant, and systematic encouragement to marriage, by removing from each individual the heavy responsibility which he would incur by the laws of nature for bringing beings into the world whom he could not support," he adds, "*Our private benevolence has the same direction as the Poor Laws, and almost invariably tends to encourage marriage,*" i. e. to weaken the preventive check. If so, it must be liable to the same objection, that it will engender more destitution and misery than it relieves. Nay, I would ask, what is there in *medical charities* to entitle them to the exclusive patronage of the economists? Mr Malthus considers the quantity of subsistence in a country as always so nicely adjusted to the population, that "the quantity of provisions consumed in workhouses must necessarily diminish the shares which would otherwise belong to more industrious and worthy members of society." But if this be true of the workhouse, what are we to say of the hospital? Must not the provisions consumed there by that large portion of the sick, whose lives may be prolonged but cannot be saved, or by those who, but for its protection, would

have died, necessarily “diminish the shares which would otherwise have gone to more profitable members of society?”

The true and consistent economist, therefore, cannot stop short at the poor laws, but will denounce every kind of relief to the poor as ultimately injurious to the public, and must recommend, in all cases, leaving the poor to their fate, in order to secure that “each individual may feel the heavy responsibility which he incurs by the laws of nature, for bringing beings into the world whom he cannot support.”

This seems to me to be the legitimate and inevitable conclusion from the principle of Malthus and his followers, that any provision for the poor, to which they can look forward in time of destitution, will necessarily weaken the preventive check on population. How it can be reconciled with the natural feelings of humanity (certainly as much a part of the laws of Providence for the regulation of human affairs, as any preventive checks on population), or with the positive and often repeated injunctions of the Gospel, or whether it can be practically carried into effect in any country, are questions into which I do not enter, because I think there is no great difficulty in proving, that the idea of either Poor Laws, or other provisions for the relief of indigence (if administered with common prudence), having any such injurious effect on the principle of moral restraint, is not only a mere delusion, but the very reverse of the truth.

I appeal to *experience*; and the first witness to whom I shall appeal in support of this assertion, is Mr Malthus himself; who, in the appendix to one of the late editions of his work, expressed himself with great candour, and with a hesitation very different from his original confidence, as to the practical operation of poor rates on population. “It is certain, that the proportion of births in this country (*i. e.* England) compared with others in similar circumstances, is VERY SMALL. Undoubtedly, the returns of the Population Act seem to warrant the assertion, that the poor rates do not much encourage marriage. Should this be true, some of the objections which have been urged in this Essay against the Poor Laws will be removed.”\* On this passage I would only observe, that if the proportion of births in England in comparison with other countries is *very small* (and no one can doubt that it is very small in comparison with Ireland), what proof can we have that they encourage marriage at all? And if not, does not this dispose of *all* the arguments which have been urged against the poor laws, so far as their effects on population is concerned?

Again, Mr Malthus tells us, that “the labourers in the south

\* On Population, sixth edition, Appendix, p. 468.

of England are so accustomed to eat fine wheaten bread, that they will suffer themselves to be half-starved before they will submit to live like the Scottish peasants. They might perhaps, in time, by the constant operation of the hard law of necessity, be reduced to live even like the lower classes of the Chinese, and *the country would then support a greater population.*”\* Now, if these men, “highly pauperized” as we know them to be, are so attached to wheaten bread (and no doubt to other comforts), that they are content to be in smaller numbers than they would have been, if they had put up with coarser fare, I maintain that they live under the influence of a very efficient preventive check on population; and the best wish we can form for the poor Irish, who are not pauperized at all, is, that they would submit themselves to the same kind of “moral restraint.”

To the same purpose, we have the distinct statement of Mr Senior, who had carefully compared the returns as to the wages, the subsistence, and comforts of the English labourers as compared with those in other parts of Europe, that “as to wages, subsistence, and mortality,” and, as he shews afterwards, generally, although less uniformly, as to diet, “England stands in the *most favourable*, or nearly the most favourable, position. With respect to money wages, the *superiority* of the English agricultural labourer is *very marked.*”† How is this to be reconciled with the belief, that the English Poor Laws are a “constant, direct, and systematic encouragement,” acting for 250 years, to excessive population?

In the next place, it has always appeared to me, that on the question, whether poor rates weaken the preventive check, and whether the sure prospect of destitution strengthens it, we have a complete *experimentum crucis* in the experience of England and of Ireland. In England, a poor rate has been generally enforced for 250 years, and in some respects been carried to an injudicious height during at least fifty years. We know that the population of a country may be doubled in twenty years. There has, therefore, been abundance of time for the English poor laws, if they really afford the “direct, constant, and systematic encouragement to marriage,” which has been supposed, to cause such an increase of the population there, and such an amount *not only of pauperism, but of misery*, consequent on redundant population, as would have put beyond all doubt the truth of the theory. But how stands the fact? We are told that England has been cursed, for 250 years, with a pernicious bounty on her population, which is actually, at this moment, *la plaie devorante*, the bane of her social condition; and that Ireland has been blessed, during a

\* Essay on Population, sixth edition, vol. i. p. 531.

† App. F, to Report of Poor-Law Commissioners, for 1834. Pref. p. 102.

much longer time, with an exemption from this evil. But at the end of this time, we find that the population of England has kept strictly within her proper limits, while that of Ireland has so completely outrun them, that "famines in Ireland are of nearly periodical recurrence," the lives of the people are continually shortened by cold and hunger, and the overflow of her population has pauperized both England and Scotland, besides extending to America. For I presume it will not be denied, that the whole pressure of the population on the means of subsistence in England comes from Ireland, and that if we could expel from the great towns in England all the adult Irish who have settled there, even within the last twenty years, there would be full employment for all the native English who are able to work; and no signs of that redundant population, which, we are told, is the necessary result of the laws that have been in operation there for more than two centuries. In these circumstances, I say, that an experiment on the effect of poor laws on population has been fairly tried, for centuries, and upon millions, and that the result has been directly the reverse of what would have followed, had the theory in question been true.

If the English population had been rendered truly redundant by the poor rates, it has had abundance of time, during their operation, to overflow into other countries, and we should have seen the effects of it in Scotland. But the English poor form no burden on the Scottish charities. Even in Glasgow, where the manufactures, naturally at times, attract skilled workmen from all countries, the English form only about 2 per cent. of the patients admitted to the Fever Hospital,\* and in Edinburgh, the proportion of English patients in hospital or other charities, is at least as small,—while the Irish poor form 31 per cent. of the fever patients in Glasgow, and sometimes amount to 50 per cent. of the applicants to the Destitute Sick Society here.

Of 3072 unemployed male operatives at Glasgow in 1837, there were "two Irish for every three Scotch applicants, and the English formed only 1 in 78 of the whole."

Again, Mr Malthus himself states, quite truly, that he considers "pestilential diseases the inevitable attendants on a population too great for its means of subsistence." This being so, when we find that the cases of contagious fever admitted into the London Fever Hospital (which receives patients on the mere order of any medical man, and from all parts of London) were 600 in ten years preceding 1817, and that in one hospital in Dublin there were 24,000 cases within these ten years, and in all the hospitals of Dublin 39,000 in twenty-one months thereafter, and when we

\* See Cowan's Statistics of Fever and Smallpox at Glasgow.

attend to the other evidence, already adduced, of the comparative rarity of contagious fever in the English towns, and its frequency and rapid extension in the Irish, what evidence do we see of the "direct, constant, and systematic encouragement to population" which he alleged to exist in the former country, and not in the latter?

That the English population is, on the whole, not truly redundant (I mean, in comparison with that of other countries equally long civilized), is established as completely as could have been desired by some of the facts stated in the last Reports of the Commissioners under the Poor-Law Amendment Act. After 250 years of poor laws, the sum of L.2,300,000 is suddenly withdrawn from the fund annually raised for the support of the poor; and immediately after this, there is a long continued frost, necessarily and greatly diminishing the demand for labour in many parts of the country. It is impossible to conceive a combination of circumstances better fitted for exhibiting the evils of a redundant population. It will be observed, that the sum thus *withdrawn* from the legal provision for the poor in England amounts to nearly three times as much (in proportion to the population) as the whole legal provision for the poor in Scotland, including assessments and voluntary contributions. In these circumstances the Poor-Law Commissioners wisely gave a discretionary power to the Guardians of many of the unions, to relax their general (and I have no doubt salutary) rule, of relieving able-bodied applicants only by taking them into the workhouses; but they state that "the total amount of out-relief, given in pursuance of the relaxation, has been so limited as to justify us in believing, that unless in a very few instances the usual regulation might have been safely enforced." Thus, in the Sheppey Union in Kent, "the most pauperized county in England," containing the town of Queenborough, "many able-bodied applied for relief during the frost, but the workhouse not being full, they were ordered in; when *every one* refused to accept the relief so offered. The guardians, thinking the reason of the non-acceptance of the offer might be the too great rigidity of the test, determined to apply for a relaxation of the rule, and to give out relief; but took care at the same time to provide work for those who were relieved, which their situation enabled them to do, since employment was readily attainable in wheeling ballast from the seashore. The board, however, to their surprise found that the offer of work was unanimously refused; *i. e.* where a test, which no one could call harsh, was applied, *not a single able-bodied labourer found it necessary to accept relief.*" Again, "the Bridge Union (also in Kent) unanimously passed a resolution, that they would strictly adhere to workhouse relief for able-

bodied, but augment the pay of permanent paupers who might want increased comforts during the inclement weather. Only seven able-bodied applied for relief, the whole of whom refused to enter the workhouse. At the conclusion of the severe weather, the chairman addressed a letter to the overseers of the 22 parishes of the union, requesting to be informed if they knew of any instances of real distress within their parishes. *All denied the existence of any*, except the overseer of one parish, who thought that, on investigation, some might be found, though he did not know of any one instance.\*

Again, in the Fifth Report, after the high prices and severe weather of winter 1838-9, they state that "the instances in which the Commissioners have been requested to sanction exceptions from the rule as to able-bodied men have been *very few*."†

As we have this decisive evidence, on a large scale (and therefore free from many sources of fallacy which affect individual observation), that the population of England, under the poor laws, shews no sign of such redundancy as Ireland, without poor laws, universally exhibits, and observing its coincidence with Mr Malthus's admission that the proportion of births in England is "*very small*," we may safely set aside the plausible argument against the principle of a poor rate, drawn from the gradual extension of the numbers claiming and receiving relief; and the tables, elaborately constructed, in proof of this extension in the countries into which this system has been introduced.

Mr Senior admits, as I shall afterwards state, that the Canton of Berne is the only country he knows, in which poor rates, levied by law, have become such a burden as they have in England; and even there as in England, it is not the proportion of the really destitute that has increased, but the employers of labourers have had the address to shift the burden of the wages of labour, in a great measure, from themselves to the rate-payers; and to convert regularly employed labourers, against their will, into paupers. Of this there will always be a risk, and it is the business of legislation to provide against it, as I believe is now effectually done in England, and to protect the interests of the rate-payers against the encroachments of the farmers and manufacturers, and other capitalists who employ the labourers, as well as against imposture and idleness among the paupers themselves.‡ But the question, in judg-

\* Fourth Report of Commissioners, &c. pp. 17, 18. Other similar instances are given.

† Fifth Report, p. 2.

‡ In Scotland, where no payment of wages out of poor rates has ever been introduced, it appears from the Report of the Commission of the General Assembly, that the proportion of paupers in the assessed districts of the country is somewhat *smaller* than in the non-assessed. The proportions are



ing of the effect of the provision for the poor, on the principle of population in any country, is, not what proportion do the paupers bear to the population, but what proportion does the population bear to the demand for labour, and the means of subsistence, in the country? Does it become redundant? Is *destitution* continually on the increase? Are the lives of the poor continually shortened by cold and hunger? Are the lower orders in the great towns periodically decimated by fever? Is the property of the rich endangered by vagrancy and lawless combinations? Is a military force required to coerce an excessive population rendered desperate by misery? Are the energies of the country crippled, and its resources withered, by this continually increasing wretchedness and disorder; and by the efforts necessary to repress it? These are the evils of a truly redundant population. They exist in full perfection in Ireland, and do not exist in England. Unless it has produced these, a poor rate has not made the population redundant; and unless it has done that, it may indeed have been partially imposed, or injudiciously distributed, but the idea of its having been *nationally* injurious is a mere chimera.

The state of the fact, then, is this. In England, after two centuries and a half of poor laws, certainly administered with injudicious profusion, we find nearly a tenth of the population paupers,\* most of whom live in comfort. In Ireland, where, during all that time, there have been no poor laws, we find nearly one-third of the population beggars, all of whom live in misery.

in the non-assessed parishes 3.53 per cent., in those totally assessed 3.44. (Report to the General Assembly, p. 22.) It is true, that in some of the districts that have been longest assessed, the proportion rises as high as 4.83 per cent., but this *apparent* advantage on the side of the non-assessed parishes is heavily counterbalanced by the admission, that in some of these last districts "the poverty of the people is such as to preclude the possibility of their contributing at the church doors more than will afford to the poor a miserable and uncertain pittance, in some cases scarcely appreciable as a means of the paupers' maintenance." Thus, at Kilmuir, in the Isle of Skye, the average funds distributable among the poor are about *L.3 annually in a population of 2275*, and a distribution is made only once in two years." "It has been found necessary to restrict the number of paupers to 60 or 70 at each distribution; but were the funds of larger amount it would be necessary to admit 200 paupers on the roll." After this statement, we cannot be surprised to find, that the gentlemen who reported on the application of the subscriptions raised over Britain for the distressed islanders some years ago, should have stated the "non-enforcement of poor rates," as one of the causes of the misery which they relieved. (Fullarton and Baird's Remarks on the Evils affecting the Highlands and Islands, &c. p. 64.) If 200 paupers (excluding the able-bodied, as has always been done in Scotland) were admitted in a population of 2275, we should have at once a pauper population in a country district, in extreme destitution, amounting nearly to 9 per cent. on the whole, *i. e.* an amount considerably greater than that which is maintained in comfort, after 250 years of poor rates in England; the proportion there, excluding the able-bodied, being almost exactly 7 per cent., in eight counties comprising several (necessarily unhealthy) large towns. (See Fifth Report of Commissioners, Table at p. 14.)

\* Somewhat less than 9 per cent. in eight of the southern and central counties. (See Fifth Report of Commissioners, Table at p. 14.) This includes the able-bodied paupers.

The number of persons in Ireland who subsist on charity during a part at least of the year, has been stated at 2,300,000 ; and I believe never, of late years, at less than 2,000,000.

I beg it may not be supposed, that I attribute the prosperity of England merely to the poor laws, nor the misery of Ireland merely to the want of them. I am not engaging in any political discussion as to the causes of the different condition of the two countries ; but only inquiring, how far the experience of the two countries justifies the assertion, so confidently made, that a legal provision for the poor makes them improvident, and hurtfully encourages population, and thereby “ increases the evils it professes to relieve ;” and that the absence of such provision naturally makes them prudent, and restrains their increase, and checks those evils ; and this I will confidently assert, that the English poor could not have been so comparatively comfortable, and the Irish poor could not have been so numerous and miserable, as they now are, if poor laws had been such a bounty on population, and if the prospect of destitution had been such a preventive check on population, as Mr Malthus and many others have supposed.

It is plain that no Irishman can be at a loss for examples, pointing out more clearly than precepts, the misery of families whose parents have married without securing the means of subsistence. But experience shews, on a scale of such extent as to be free from all individual sources of fallacy, that the continued sight of this misery is no moral restraint upon him, and that he is much more reckless in his conduct than the English poor, who are so much better fed, lodged, and clothed, and who live under the protection of a law, giving, according to the theory in question, “ a direct, constant, and systematic encouragement to marriage.” Both in England and Ireland the population is, no doubt, restrained by the difficulty of obtaining subsistence, considerably within its capability of increase ; but in Ireland it advances to the very verge of the limit which is set by absolute starvation,—the preventive check of moral restraint being nearly ineffectual ; whereas, in England, this check is so strong, that no considerable portion of the population ever approaches that limit, and, but for the influx of the Irish, none would ever touch it.

It is true that the lower Irish are a rude and imperfectly civilized people ; they are not so illiterate as many of the English poor, in whom the principle of moral restraint is much more powerful ; and the law of nature, by which the improvidence of parents leads to the destitution of children is, as Mr Malthus himself observes, “ intelligible to the humblest capacity.” Even if the advocates of the theory resort to the extravagant supposition, that there is something in the Irish character specifically different from all others in this respect, and making them reckless

and improvident where others would be prudent, this will not avail them, for any one who chooses to make the observation will see, that among the educated poor of Scotland the same union of reckless improvidence, with extreme destitution, is uniformly found; and we shall see afterwards that the same holds of other countries.

The truth is, that below a certain grade of poverty, the preventive check of moral restraint has no power. Twenty-five years of observation of the habits of the poor have shewn me, that there are none among whom population makes so rapid progress as those who see continually around them examples of utter destitution and misery. In such circumstances, men hardly look forward to the future more than animals. It is easy for us to say, that by cutting off from a poor family any prospect of relief, in case of destitution, we can make them careful and prudent. The practical result is widely different. Another alternative is uniformly embraced. *Under the pressure of misfortune, they lower their habits*; and those who have not been accustomed to observe them, are not aware how much reduction of comfort the family of a labouring man, disabled or deprived of employment, may undergo, and not only life be preserved, but the capacity for occasional irregular and precarious employment continue. Their better clothes may be pawned, their furniture and bed-clothes may be sold, they can lie on straw or shavings of wood, sometimes on "bare boards," and never undress; two or more families may be crowded into a single room, and struggle to pay the rent among them. Such associations of "lone women," who have only occasional employment, and of unemployed and disabled men, widows, and orphans, are continually formed. They gather cinders on the streets late at night and early in the morning, they beg for bread, wherever they are permitted, among the rich, and if repelled from them, they seek for sympathy among the poor. Three meals in the week will support life for many weeks. I have known instances, where I had satisfactory moral evidence that the mothers of such families have submitted, for the sake of their children, to such privations for months together. If they fall sick, as after a time they infallibly do,—the medical charities come to their relief. Thus, almost without visible means of subsistence, many of the poorest families in this and other great towns manage to pass the winter, while in summer they find precarious and desultory employment in fields and gardens.

Now, if you mark the conduct of people who have fallen thus low, or watch the future progress of children brought up in this state of misery and degradation, you look in vain for the principle of moral restraint, or for indications of prudential motives, counteracting the natural tendency of human passions. Many of the children die miserably in early youth, and those who survive are uniformly

reckless and improvident. The daughters of families thus circumstanced receive no education which fits them even for service; and if they do not become prostitutes (which does not happen so often as might be supposed), they are almost uniformly mothers at the age of twenty; and the progress of population is thus rendered most rapid in that portion of society which lies nearest the verge of absolute starvation.\*

On the other hand, when men are preserved from this state of hopeless and abject destitution, they all (or with few and trifling exceptions) gradually fall, more or less, under the dominion of *artificial wants*, and form to themselves a *standard of comfort*, from which they will never willingly descend, and to maintain which they will keep themselves under a degree of restraint, unknown to those of the poor, who are continually struggling to obtain the first necessities of life. Such observations have been very frequently made on a small scale by many others as well as myself, and they seem to me amply to confirm and easily to explain the result of the grand experiment in which Ireland and England have been engaged during the last two centuries. Indeed, the simple fact, already mentioned, of the habitual *cleanliness* of most of the English poor, even in the most pauperized countries, as compared with those either of Ireland or Scotland, is of itself sufficient to shew where the preventive check is in fullest operation.

Mr Revans, who was Secretary to the Poor-Law Commission, both in England and Ireland, gives a comparative statement of the average annual expenditure of the family of an agricultural labourer in England and in Ireland, drawn up from reports furnished to the Commissioners.† The former amounts to L.33, 2s.,—the latter to L.5, 8s. In the latter, indeed, there is no item for clothing, which is L.8, 16s. in the former, but, he says, “it would be idle to attempt to estimate the expenditure of an Irish

\* It is well observed by Mr MacCulloch, that persons belonging to the higher ranks continually deceive themselves, if they attempt to conjecture, from their own feelings, how those in the lowest rank will conduct themselves in any particular circumstances; and, therefore, that we can trust only to experience and observation in any speculations involving anticipations of that conduct. One simple illustration of this is in the regard paid to cleanliness among the lowest of the poor. As pure water costs nothing, we do not see why even extreme poverty should necessarily indispose mankind to the use of an article so essential to the comfort of the higher ranks; but experience shews that it *uniformly* does so. Again, in the higher ranks, on a sudden change of fortune, and near prospect of destitution, we know that suicide is not uncommon; but in the lowest rank, I believe, from that cause, it is almost absolutely unknown. At least, although I have seen as much as most men of the distress and anguish of mind resulting from extreme destitution among the poor, I have met only with a single case in which this remedy for the evils of life was even talked of; and in that case the proposal excited a strong expression of horror in those who heard it.

peasant's family on clothing. "An English labourer expends on tea, sugar, treacle, and beer alone, about L.5, which is about the value of the total earnings of an Irish labourer."\*

Now, I have already stated the evidence we have, that the English labourers, even in Kent, whether paupers or not, living in this state of comparative comfort, do not become perniciously redundant in numbers; but in Ireland, according to the Reports of the Poor-Law Commission, from almost all the counties, it appears, that, among the poorest of the labourers, *early marriages are universal*. Thus, it is stated in Reports quoted in Mr Revan's pamphlet:—From Kerry, "It was remarked, that the poorer the individuals were, the more anxious were they to marry." From Donegal, "the poorer classes are invariably found more anxious to marry early than the more comfortable classes." The farmers, and "those who are better off, do not marry until they have some little subsistence." From Londonderry, "the poorest marry the earliest,"—"the farmer's sons always marry later than the labourers, and are more cautious." From Clare, "they almost all marry here, as soon as they can command money enough to pay the priest. *Those who have been accustomed to comparative comforts are generally more cautious and provident concerning marriage.*"† The Report of Mr Nicholls, on which the Irish Poor-Law Act was chiefly founded, fully confirms these statements as to the utter recklessness of the most destitute of the Irish. "In Ireland, unhappily, prudential considerations do not prevail at all, or prevail in a very imperfect degree, and marriages are daily contracted with the most reckless improvidence. Boys and girls marry, literally without habitation or any means of support, trusting as they say to Providence, as others have done before them. It is quite lamentable to witness the effects of this ignorant recklessness," &c.‡ I need not say that all this is in exact conformity with my own observations of the habits of the poor in Edinburgh;—both of the Irish and of the most destitute of the Scottish families. And the same is observed in Glasgow. "During any depression in trade, or scarcity of provisions, the weavers suffer first and most severely; they may well be accounted the poorest class of operatives in Glasgow." Now of 2273 married men who applied for relief from the public subscriptions in 1837 (more than nine-tenths of them weavers), 532 were below 30, and from the num-

\* Evils of the State of Ireland, &c. p. 81.

† Of 1920 unemployed Scotchmen at Glasgow in 1837, 632, or nearly one-third, were nearly single men; of 1103 unemployed Irish, only 155, or 1 in 7, were single. (See Bill of Mortality by Henry Paul, Table 25.)

‡ First Report, p. 55.

ber of children specified, a large number of the applicants above 30 must have been married early. "These facts shew the great improvidence of early marriages among the *very poorest* of the working classes. Indeed the writer can state, on the testimony of a manufacturer long in extensive business, that *in no class is marriage in general so early* as among the weavers."—Observations on the Poorest Class of Operatives in Glasgow, by the Secretary of the Statistical Society, pp. 6, 7.

Again, another illustration of the same general principle is found in the lamentable condition of a race of men of a very different character from the Irish, the Highlanders and Islanders in the West Coast of Scotland, where, coexistent with "a state of misery and wretchedness equalled, we believe, in no country of the world except in Ireland," we find from the able report of Messrs Fullarton and Baird, that, "in spite of repeated drains by emigration, the number of the people has been, for many years, increasing with a degree of rapidity seldom exemplified in an old and poor country," in fact approaching to the increase of the population of London, where the wealth attracts an enormous annual influx from the country.\* "With *singular improvidence*, as his children get married, the crofter divides and subdivides his land among them till its utmost produce is utterly inadequate to their subsistence."† And it is important to observe, that these gentlemen, although imbued with what I consider a national prejudice against Poor Laws, and apparently not aware of the return to right principles which has taken place in England, were led by their inquiries and observations to the conclusion, that the most essential of all remedies for this state of things would be "a bold and sweeping Poor Law for the Highlands and Islands, extending, for a time, to *all classes* of the poor."‡

The answers given to the Queries of the Poor-Law Commissioners, from those parts of Europe where there is little or no legal provision for the poor, as to the habits of the people regarding marriage, are precisely to the same purpose. Thus, in the Azores, where "there are no laws for granting relief to the poor of any description, excepting the sick," and where, there-

\* In spite of these emigrations, of a continued resort of many of the inhabitants to the low country, and of large drafts to the army, the whole population of 26 Island parishes rose between 1798 and 1838, from 58,000 to 95,000, and that of 28 Highland parishes, from 104,000 to 154,000; *i. e.* in one case 63 in the other nearly 50 per cent.—(Fullarton and Baird, pp. 14, 70.) In Denmark, under a very efficient poor law, and where there is no emigration, the increase of the agricultural population in 33 years did not exceed 26 per cent. And in Berwickshire, where there has been for many years a higher Poor Rate than in any other part of Scotland, the increase of the population in 40 years appears to have been a mere trifle.—(Turnbull's Report on Pauperism in Berwickshire, pp. 13 and 14.)

† *Ib.* p. 16.

‡ *Ib.* p. 96.

fore, the aged and disabled have no resource but mendicity, it is stated that "poverty does not appear to check matrimony. In general, the poor people marry at an early age, according to the physical temperament of parties."\* In like manner, the Report from the Sardinian States, after mentioning the charitable institutions as "ne faisant que soulager un petit nombre des infortunés les plus graves," goes on to observe very truly, that "c'est en point aux encouragemens que donne la charité publique, qu'il faut imputer le grand nombre des mariages precoces et imprevoyans qui se contractent."†

On the other hand, in those countries where there is uniform and legal relief for the poor, it is not indeed uniformly but generally distinctly stated, that there is no peculiar disposition to early marriages. Thus, in Denmark, Mr Macgregor, British Consul, says, "Relief, or the expectation of it, has not hitherto been found to produce any sensible effect on the industry or frugality of the labourers; nor are the poor laws instrumental in promoting early marriages among the peasants."‡ In Hamburgh, "among the lower classes, marriages before twenty-five or thirty years are rare."§ In Bremen, where "relief is regularly afforded to the poor by their respective parishes, but if they are detected begging, they are sent to the workhouse, and there maintained," "early marriages are not generally complained of; the poor seldom marry under twenty-five years of age."|| In Holland, where the amount of relief is fully as great as in England, "such degradation attaches to the idea of obtaining relief, as is sufficient to stimulate a labourer to the greatest exertion and frugality to avoid it; and the same cause operates in preventing premature marriages."¶ In Prussia, where "the law prescribes that every town and village must support its own members when in distress," and speedy and sufficient means of relief are "always afforded when necessary," "these regulations operate beneficially on industry, and the inducements to marriage are uninfluenced by the receipt or expectation of relief."\*\* In Norway, "it is still considered disgraceful to have recourse to parish relief, and the expectation of such relief has no perceptible influence on the age at which they marry."††

What has now been stated seems to me to be enough to entitle us to conclude with perfect confidence, not only that we may follow the dictates of humanity in affording a permanent relief to the miseries of the poor in a complex state of society, without in-

\* Appendix F to Report of Poor-Law Commissioners for 1834, p. 645.

† Ibid. p. 657.

‡ Ibid. p. 292.

§ Ibid. p. 393.

|| Ibid. p. 413.

¶ Ibid. p. 584.

\*\* Ibid. p. 426 and 463.

†† Ibid. p. 697.

curing the danger of ultimately increasing the numbers of the destitute poor, which the economists have so loudly proclaimed,—but even that the English poor law, faulty as in some respects it has been, has been a most powerful and effective agent in *strengthening* the preventive check, and keeping the population at some distance from the limit which the actual want of sustenance would have imposed.

The whole secret of the preventive check appears to me to consist in the growth and support of *artificial wants* among the poor. Now, in order to understand how these are fostered by the practical application of poor laws, it is necessary to look chiefly to their effect on the *rising generation*. Take the common case of a labourer dying in middle life, and leaving a family of young children; or disabled by injury or disease, and unable to provide for his family. If this happens in Ireland, his widow or family has no resource but in vagrancy and casual charity; and in Scotland, the legal relief granted is often a mere pittance: the children are brought up in misery, they cannot possibly acquire any artificial wants, or look forward to the enjoyment of any comforts; and all experience (if on so large a scale as to be freed from accidental fallacies) teaches that, in these circumstances, there is no moral or prudential check on their powers of procreation. Such of them as survive the hardships of their early years, become fathers and mothers almost as soon as nature will permit, and contribute to overspread the land with another generation of sufferers. But in England they fall under the protection of the law; they are fixed to their parishes, and brought up under the eye of persons more or less interested in their welfare; their habits are prevented from degenerating; they grow up under the influence of artificial wants, and would feel themselves degraded if they were voluntarily to part with such of the comforts of life as they have hitherto enjoyed, and descend to the filth and penury of the Irish cabin. They live on wheaten bread, as Mr Malthus himself tells us, and are practically content to remain in smaller numbers than they might have been, had they been satisfied with coarser fare. Experience proves, that their numbers do not become redundant, and that their standard of comfort in after life does not degenerate from that of their fathers.

That the artificial wants, which nature never fails to awaken in the minds of all young persons who are brought up in tolerable comfort, are in reality an infinitely more effectual check on early marriages and excessive population, than the mere prospect of want of food is in the minds of persons brought up in utter destitution, must, I think, appear obvious to any one who reflects on the difference in this respect between the higher and lower ranks of society in all countries. How many men are there, in the dif-



ferent ranks which intervene between the lowest and the highest, who purposely defer the period of marriage until they shall be able—not merely to maintain a family, but to maintain it on that precise level on which they are themselves moving, and who die childless before they can accomplish their design? How many women of these ranks pass their lives in single blessedness, not because they are afraid of starvation for themselves or their offspring, but because taste, or vanity, or sundry other considerations forbid their forming unions with men whom they consider their inferiors? How many motives of filial affection, of duty, of self-respect, of hope, of pride, of avarice, of ambition—combine to determine the question of marriage or celibacy, in the ranks of which we now speak? These ranks, in reality, never become redundant; many die without offspring, but few of them descend into the lowest rank, and none have their lives shortened by mere privations. The lower in society that these complex motives operate, the more effectual is the preventive check. That some of them are in full operation in the English paupers, and restrain their increase, the facts already stated sufficiently prove; but which of them finds place in the Irish cabin?

I maintain, then, that it is quite reasonable, and in strict accordance with the result of observations which every one who pleases may make on the habits and history of poor families, to believe, that the English Poor Law, particularly in its influence on children, by cherishing the feeling of artificial wants, and maintaining the standard of comfort, in numbers who would otherwise have been reduced to the level of Irish vagrants, continually represses the tendency to excessive population; and that nothing short of a legal enactment can be relied on for uniformly and permanently securing such comforts during youth, as are essential to sustain these habits; and counteract that real *bounty on population* which accidents and misfortunes, and consequent destitution and degradation, would otherwise continually and inevitably bring on numerous families in every season and in every district of the country.

And being satisfied, from individual observation, and from the facts already stated, that this is a reasonable expectation as to the effect of the poor's rate, I hold it to be a strong confirmation of the soundness of these views, that the extension of artificial wants, and the elevation of the standard of comfort, and the absence of indications of redundancy, are not only observed to be compatible with the existence of poor laws at this day, but are historically known to have grown up in England under the operation of that system of legal provision for the poor. For it is certain that the miserable condition and habits of the lower orders of the English peasantry before the introduction of poor laws, according to the

statement of contemporary authors, were hardly superior to those of the Irish at this moment. In consequence of changes in the system of agriculture at that time in England, as more lately in Ireland and in the Highlands, great numbers of the poor country people were thrown out of employment, and as a contemporary writer expresses it, "old fathers, poor widows, and young children lie begging in the miry streets." The landlords "turned them out of their sheds like mice, and thousands in England, through such, beg now from door to door, who had kept honest houses."

"The similarity in the state of society," says Mr Revans, "in the rural districts of England, immediately preceding the passing of the 43d of Elizabeth, to the state of society in the rural districts of Ireland at the present time, is very remarkable.

"The peasantry of England at that period appear to have possessed the same extreme desire to obtain land, and consequently the same willingness to submit to exorbitant rents, which now characterize the Irish peasantry. The practice of ejecting the peasantry from their dwellings, and of destroying them and joining the small tillage farms, and laying them down in grass, seems then to have been as common in England as it is now in Ireland.

"Many thousands of the lower people in Norfolk and Suffolk rose in 1549, and did infinite damage to the city of Norwich. Outrages of this description seem to have been, in fact, the immediate occasion of the enactment of the English poor laws.

"When reading the foregoing statements, it is difficult to prevent the impression that they refer to the outrages committed a few years since by the Terry Alts in the county of Clare; the nature of the outrages, and the causes of them, are so very similar.

"The preambles to the acts of Elizabeth, which were passed a few years later, for the relief of the poor, shew that England was at that period, as Ireland is now, infested by hordes of wandering beggars.

"*After the passing of the 43d of Elizabeth, which gave to the destitute able-bodied a right to relief, I find no farther mention of agrarian outrages, of extensive misery among the peasantry, or of the nuisance caused by large bodies of vagrants.*"\*

I assert, then, with confidence, that all experience teaches, not only that unrelieved suffering is quite ineffectual to teach prudence or moral restraint to the poor, but that it has uniformly the very opposite effect; and, on the other hand, that the natural effect of well-timed and well-directed public charity is not only to relieve suffering, but to *prevent degradation*, and so to support

and strengthen the only check on excessive population which either policy or humanity will allow us to contemplate. It is *not the fear of lowering, but the hope of maintaining or bettering their condition*, which really constitutes that preventive check, and that hope is continually maintained among the poor, by the certainty of assistance in distress, in circumstances where it would otherwise have been extinguished in despair. The English poor have become cautious, just as they have become cleanly, not in consequence of positive laws or direct exhortations, but by the silent operation of those feelings of human nature which always excite artificial wants, and elevate the standard of comfort among those who are steadily preserved from the degradation of hopeless poverty.

But, as it is well observed by Mr Revans, “ We have long lost sight of the *advantages* which have been derived by England from her poor laws; and lately stood aghast at the evils which the maladministration of them during thirty years had produced. *The late inquiry in Ireland has shewn us the evils which they have remedied; compared with which those of the late maladministration shrink into insignificance.*”\*

The ideas of the late Duc de la Rochefoucauld on the subject of public provision for the poor, published at the time of the French Revolution, have always appeared to me perfectly sound and consonant to all experience. How much misery, both in his country and in ours, might have been prevented, if they had been uniformly acted on, even since that time, in both!

“ In assisting those who are without resource in sickness, age, or infirmity, and in relieving the families of such persons of the ruinous expenses which the care of them involves, you not only relieve misery in some, but *prevent it in others*. So also, in providing for orphans, and aiding those who are burdened with unusual numbers of children, you not only diminish present suffering, but *dry up the source of further misfortunes*, and of many vices consequent on misfortunes, in which they or their relations would otherwise be involved. By giving those succours which helpless indigence requires, and refusing those which are demanded by men capable of making themselves useful by their own industry, a wise constitution will strengthen and improve the morals of a country; it will *dignify the relief it gives, and preserve to those who receive it the feeling of self-respect and independence*.

“ When the relief given to the unfortunate was, as heretofore, from pious legacies or private charities, diffused irregularly over the kingdom, it was insufficient in some places, excessive in

others, quite wanting in others. The relief given by private charity is always partial and uncertain, depending on the accidental residence and disposition of the rich. It should be the business of the French Constitution to replace the incomplete system of charitable foundations and private charities by an *enlightened and prospective system of legislation, extending to all the departments, carrying to the most obscure parts of the country the assistance which misfortunes demand, and guided by no consideration in the distribution of that assistance, but the degree of the misfortunes by which it is demanded.*"\*

II. This quotation leads me to say a few words on certain other delusions (as they seem to me), which have been industriously propagated on the subject of the poor laws, in reference to their effect, not on the numbers of the poor, but on the feelings of the rich towards them, and on their own character.

Thus, it is often said, that a poor law interferes with voluntary charity; that it takes the relief which the poor would otherwise have received as a boon, and invests it with the ungracious character of a tax, thus deadening the sensibility of the rich, and intercepting the gratitude of the poor. I answer, that a poor rate is not preferred to voluntary charity, if this could be made equally uniform and efficacious, but becomes necessary as a *substitute* for it in an advanced and complex state of society, where the experience of all nations shews that it is practically and utterly impossible that voluntary charity should be collected with the same uniformity, administered to the same extent, and adapted with equal precision to the circumstances of individual cases, and thereby rendered equally effectual either towards the relief of present suffering, or the maintenance of artificial wants, which I maintain to be the true security against multiplication of that suffering, among all classes of the poor. In a perfectly simple, and, at the same time, educated and civilized state of society, as in some of the country parishes in Scotland, where all the higher orders who are to give, and all the lower orders who are to receive, are aware of their duties, and are known to one another, and, as long as the proprietors are resident, of charitable disposition, and attentive to their duties, the burden may be sufficiently equalized among the former, and the benefits sufficiently secured to the latter, without the intervention of the law; or if the law intervene, it will be only to sanction, or sometimes to define, and partially extend, the present practice. In fact, in such a state of society, if peace be preserved, property protected, and industry encouraged, how seldom is the intervention of the law

\* See *Rapport du Comité de Mendicité*, 1792.

for any purpose required! But, does any man of common sense suppose, that, because in such a community, and while these conditions last, the poor may be safely left to the care of their neighbours and immediate superiors, and will thus be secured from destitution and degradation, therefore the same results can be depended on in the heart of a populous city, or on the wide-spread lands of the Irish or Scottish absentees, where any one who attends to the state of the fact may perceive, that the circumstances of not one family in a thousand requiring relief are known to, or will ever be studied by, one person in a thousand of those who have the means of giving it?

The idea, that the sensibility of the rich to the miseries of the poor is weakened by a system of poor laws, is a mere speculative delusion, the very reverse of the fact. The truth is, that when the poor are left, in a complex state of society, to voluntary charity, they are miserably neglected; great numbers of them sink into abject destitution; the rich have continually before their eyes examples of poverty and wretchedness, such as are almost unknown in a country where the poor are really under the protection of the law. This sight gradually becomes habitual to them; they comfort themselves with the reflection that many beggars are impostors, and too often "indulge in unhallowed pleasantries in the sacred presence of misery." It is *thus* that sensibility is deadened. Where such spectacles are rare, they produce a very different effect: if the beggars of a small town in Ireland could be suddenly transported to one of the same population in England, they would excite the commiseration of hundreds for one who is in the slightest degree moved by the spectacle where it actually exists. Where the standard of comfort is raised among the lower orders, the ideas of the higher orders as to what ought to be the condition of the poor, and what are the proper objects of charitable assistance, naturally arise along with it, and human life is estimated at something like its just value; as is abundantly obvious on a comparison of many parts of England with Ireland, or even with Scotland. The following is not the statement of a speculative philanthropist, but of a practical man of business, whose opportunities of observation and inquiry have been perhaps more extensive than those of any other man in this country.

"The grand argument of the advocates of the voluntary system is, that compulsory assessment diminishes private charity. How they arrive at this conclusion, I am at a loss to conceive. I have heard the assertion, *usque ad nauseam*, but I have never heard the grounds upon which it is based. Is it based upon the absence of private charity in England? Is it based upon the boundless private charity in Ireland? Those who make the as-

section must surely have forgotten, that the largest compulsory assessment in the world is in England, or must have overlooked the endless number of institutions supported by voluntary contributions in this country. Have they never heard of soup-kitchens, of distributions of coals, of blankets, &c. &c.? If not, let them read Mr Chadwick's 'Report on the Charities of Spital-fields.' They must have forgotten, too, that England's charity has not staid at home; that her charity has reached the sufferings of every other nation; and that, hardened as the heart of England is said to be by assessment, it has even felt for those whom Ireland, not hardened by assessment, was unable to relieve. Has any one forgotten the great subscription in London some years since, when more than L.100,000 were subscribed for the starving population on the west coast of Ireland? \* One-seventh of the whole of the poor rates of England, viz. of L.8,000,000, was expended in London and its immediate neighbourhood, and yet there is scarcely a principal street in that city, in which there is not a palace dedicated to charity, and supported by voluntary contributions. I only wish that those who talk of compulsory payments destroying private charity could witness the *energetic pleading for the poor*, which, as an assistant Poor-Law Commissioner, I constantly witness in those *rate-payers* who have not been disabused of erroneous reports which have been spread relative to the objects of the new system. Where the deserving poor are concerned, *I never met with a man willing to curtail their comforts*, though I frequently meet with those whose benevolent feelings would lead them to give charity where it is not required, and, consequently, where it will do mischief." †

To the same purpose, Mr Highmore, author of "A View of the Charitable Institutions in London," states, "with exulting satisfaction, that the municipal law, which enforces an annual rate for the support of the poor in every parish, *presents no obstacle* to the exercise of charity in every department, public or private." "I am not aware of an instance where any one, being desirous of declining his contribution at the anniversaries of any of our charitable institutions of London or Westminster, advertised for one instant to the poor rates, as a ground for withholding that contribution." ‡

\* The author might have added, as a contrast, the amount of subscription of the absentee proprietors of one of the most distressed Irish counties, which fell considerably short of L.100.

† Revans.—This is surely a sufficient answer to the statement of Dr Chalmers,—I have no doubt, founded on individual observation,—but certainly not on so copious an induction of facts,—that the higher and lower ranks in England "look to each other with all the fierceness and suspicion of natural enemies, and stand in the grim array of mutual hostility."

‡ Preface, p. 18.

“ I am convinced, that to leave the destitute to voluntary charities, so far from encouraging, tends to destroy, the finer feelings. When I first arrived in Dublin, I suffered the greatest pain from the constant sight of half-naked and squalid human beings. I at first attempted to relieve them, but soon found that it was quite beyond my individual means to make the slightest impression on the mass of misery, and gave up the attempt as hopeless. Each person is actuated by the same feeling, and thus charity ceases.”\*

The truth is, that experience has long since unequivocally demonstrated, that, in an advanced and complex state of society, neither the happiness nor the lives of the great body of the poor have any adequate security from the humane feelings of the higher orders ; not because those feelings do not exist, but because their operation is rendered absolutely unavailing by the want of sufficient intercourse between these different classes. We shudder at the savage answer attributed to a Highland Chief, when asked what was to become of the numerous families whom he had ejected from his estate to make room for sheep-walks, “ Loch Duich is deep enough for them all !” But let us reflect on what happens continually in our own day, and among a people of at least as humane feelings as ourselves : “ Ejection of the peasantry is in the power,” says Mr Revans, “ of every person in Ireland from whom they hold their lands, and is freely exercised to satisfy every variety of feeling, by Protestants and Catholics, by Tories, Whigs, and Radicals, equally towards those of their own as of other sects.” And when we inquire into the fate of those poor families, unprotected by the law, thrown on the world, where there is no demand for their labour, we have abundance of evidence as to the very frequent result. Some of the witnesses say merely, “ Few gentlemen give them settlements, they are mostly thrown on the world ; they lie houseless on road-sides and in ditches ; they suffer much certainly, but they are soon lost sight of.” But others are more explicit, “ I fear,” says the Reverend Mr O’Sullivan,† “ very many of them perish.” “ It would be impossible,” says Dr Doyle,‡ “ for language to convey an idea of the state of distress to which the ejected tenantry have been reduced. *A vast number of them have perished from want.*” “ I have known a lane, with a small district adjoining, in the town in which I live, to have been peopled by thirty or forty families who came from the country, and I think that, in the course of twelve months there were not ten families of the thirty surviving. *The bulk of them had died.*”§ When we think of these things, we may ask

\* Revans.

† Examination before the Committee of the House of Commons, Qu. 6257.

‡ Ditto, Qu. 4364.

§ Qu. 4383.

ourselves whether “a moment’s plash, a bubbling cry,” were not a good exchange for months of suffering and sorrow, and then a lingering death on a cabin floor; and whether there is more security to the poor from the voluntary charity of the present day, than from the arbitrary sway of the feudal chiefs?

The practical operation of the English or the German poor law is simply this,—that a landed proprietor may eject the occupiers of his soil if he pleases; but if, by so doing, he reduces them to destitution, he must pay for their support. We know that this system is compatible with a rapid increase of the value of the land; and I very much doubt whether there is any other, under which the rights of property on the one hand, and the lives and comforts of the poor on the other, have been equally secured.

III. Again, one of the arguments which is stated against a system of poor laws is, that it breaks down the spirit of independence in the poor, and reduces them to the level of retainers on the higher orders.

Now, in considering how far this objection is well-founded, I speak of the poor’s rates only as applicable to those who cannot find work, or cannot maintain themselves in a state of tolerable comfort by work, the unemployed poor, the aged and disabled poor, and the widows and orphans of the poor.

The Scriptures tell us, that we shall “have the poor with us always;” and experience shews, and science explains, that, in a long inhabited and highly civilized country, where there are great towns and unhealthy employments, and where great numbers of the lower orders die at early periods of life, and leave families or relations who had depended on their industry, the classes of which we now speak are always very numerous. Now, let us ask ourselves, how these unemployed and helpless poor are to be provided for? That they cannot be provided for, nor their numbers repressed, by leaving them to their fate, is, I think, abundantly proved by what has been already said, and by the lamentable experience of Ireland and of the Highlands. All experience shews, that that plan is impracticable; and, if practicable, would have the very opposite effect from what is intended. And, if any one supposes, that, by encouraging Savings Banks and Benefit Societies, we shall secure that all labourers, occasionally thrown out of employment, all aged and disabled persons, and all widows and orphans, shall be provided for by a “surplus fund” resulting from the wages of labour, I can only say, that he indulges in a Utopian scheme, to which no real approximation has yet been made in any rich and populous country, certainly not in ours.

Farther, in every rich, and populous, and luxurious country,



where there are great towns, and where the distinction of ranks, and the division of labour, and the habitual separation of the higher and lower members of society, have long existed, not only will there necessarily be many unemployed and helpless poor, but the great majority of these (whatever system be adopted for their relief) will necessarily and permanently be *personally unknown to the great body of the higher ranks*, and known only to a few, who are wholly unable to supply their wants.\*

I apprehend it, therefore, to be quite certain, that in the order of things now established in this and all other civilized countries, the productive labourers and the higher ranks must be content, not only to bear the burden of the maintenance of a large number of the lower ranks, unemployed, or partially employed, or incapable of employment, but to contribute in one way or another to the maintenance of numbers of such persons, of whom, individually, they know as little as of the workmen whose hands have prepared for them the various luxuries which they daily consume. This burden they ought to regard as the price which they pay for all the advantages and enjoyments which they derive from the complex and artificial, but to them highly favourable, state of society in which they live.

Now, this being so, the question is, Whether that large body of the poor, who *must* thus be mainly dependent on the bounty of persons higher in society than themselves, *and to whom they are individually unknown*, will have their feelings of independence more injured by *claiming that bounty as a right*, secured to them by a provident and benevolent law, the application of which to themselves they can prove—or by *supplicating it as a boon*, to which they must recommend themselves as they best can, by ingenious contrivances to fix the attention, and by touching representations to move the feelings, of their superiors? In which case is the greater encouragement given to deceit and imposture, or to cringing, fawning, and flattering their superiors? In which case may it reasonably be expected that the relief given will be most regular, most permanent, best proportioned to the circumstances and wants of the applicants, most compatible with exertions of industry in aid of it, and therefore most likely to maintain the self-respect and respectability, and to preserve the feeling of artificial wants, in those who receive it? In point of fact, where do we meet with the greater feeling of self-respect and independence, or the higher standard of comfort—in the English pauper, who demands the protection of the law, or in the Irish beggar, who implores the compassion of the charitable? The

\* Thus in Ireland under the voluntary system of charity, as Mr Revans informs us, “all persons profess to be quite ignorant about the habits and character of those whom they relieve.”

answers to these questions appear to me so clear, I have watched the progress of so many families receiving assistance in both these ways, and am so confident of the usual results, that I have long considered the notion now in question as one of the most singular delusions which has ever prevailed on this subject. The assertion of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, already quoted, appears to me almost like an axiom,—that “an enlightened and prospective system of legislation, extending equally to all the departments, carrying to all the parts of the country the assistance which misfortunes demand, and guided by no consideration in its distribution, but the degree of misfortunes which demand it,” is that which “dignifies the relief it gives, and preserves to those who receive it, the feeling of self-respect and independence.”\*

It is practically so well known that private charity, in a complex state of society, where the poor and rich live much asunder, is always irregular;—that it is insufficient in some places, excessive in others, and gives encouragement to deceit and imposture in all;—that public institutions are constantly formed, for its collection and distribution, that is, *it takes the form of a public and regulated provision for the poor before it reaches them*; and in very many cases, as I can testify, the poor confound what they receive in this way with that to which they are entitled by law, under the general name of the “town’s money,” *and do not know which is which*. Now, in this case, it is easy to perceive that the money given under both these forms is distributed with more discrimination, gives less encouragement to deceit and imposture, and is less injurious to the feelings of self-respect and independence in those receiving it, than that which is given in the boasted way of private charity, that is, by persons among the rich who do not know the poor, nor understand their characters and habits. But I should like to understand distinctly, how the money given in one of these modes should be fatal to the spirit of independence in the poor, and in the other not,—the poor themselves having no perception of any difference between the two.

Again, an argument against the Poor Laws as affecting the

\* “All persons, who cannot find employment, or procure wages sufficient to support the body in health and strength,” says Wordsworth, “are entitled to maintenance *by law*. There can be no greater error than the belief, that this principle does of necessity operate for the degradation of those who claim, or are so circumstanced, as to make it likely that they may claim, through laws founded on it, relief or assistance. *The direct contrary is the truth*. It may be unanswerably maintained that its tendency is to raise, not to depress; by stamping a value on life, which can belong to it only where the laws have placed men willing to work, and unable to find employment, above the necessity of looking for protection against hunger and other natural evils, either to individual or casual charity, to despair or death, or to the breach of the law by theft or violence.” Yarrow Revisited, &c. Postscript, p. 293.

character of the poor, which finds much favour with the administrators of legal relief in Scotland, is thus stated: "When attention is paid to the causes of the high and increasing rates in England, and to the circumstances which have kept down the allowances to paupers in this country, it will at once appear, that *from the smallness of the sums paid in Scotland, results the great superiority of the system.* The cause of poor rates being high, and constantly increasing in any country, is the idleness and improvidence of the poorer classes of society. This is followed by the extinction of mutual kindness and benevolence among them; and when the parish lends its aid, the assistance bestowed by it is received with discontent."\* Now, with all deference to the high character and benevolent intentions of this author, I must say that there are here three assumptions implied, if not actually asserted, relative to the English poor as compared with the Scotch, which are quite gratuitous. *First*, it is assumed that the rates for their support are not only high (which is true), but that they are continually increasing; which, from the statements already made, appears distinctly to be the reverse of the truth, whether we compare their amount with the wealth or the population of the country. *Secondly*, it is assumed, as the cause of this erroneously supposed increase, that the English poor are idle and improvident as compared with the Scotch. Now, that idleness and improvidence were, to a certain degree, favoured among the English poor, by the now extinct system of paying wages out of poor rates, is admitted. But that system was not established at the desire of the labouring classes, but of their employers;† and, at all events, has no connection with any poor law which has ever existed, or which any one wishes to exist, in Scotland; and that the English poor (notwithstanding that injudicious but now obsolete practice) are habitually idle or improvident or intemperate in comparison with the Scotch, in a degree which justifies the difference of the law in regard to the poor in the two countries, seems to me to be a mere delusion. If they had been habitually improvident, how could their increase have

\* Observations on the Poor Laws, by David Monypenny, Esq. of Pitmilley.

† "The impression that the working classes in England are very anxious to obtain the public provision," says Mr Revans, "has been generated by the large number who, from the commencement of the century till the amendment of the law, received relief from the rates. *This impression is erroneous.* The working classes did not seek the parish aid; it was forced upon them by their employers. The evils of the poor-law system did not commence by the desire of the labourers, but by a general combination of their employers, who resorted to the *scale system*, to avoid raising wages in proportion to the increased price of corn; and from that time to the present, a constant war has been kept up by the employers in many parts of England, against those labourers who struggled against receiving pay from the poor's rates."—(*Evils of the State of Ireland.*)

been kept within bounds as we have seen that it has? If they had been habitually idle, how could the English people have acquired the character, which they have, of being the most industrious nation on earth? If they had been habitually and comparatively intemperate, how could it have happened, that the examinations before the Committees of the House of Commons, tended to shew that drunkenness is more prevalent in Glasgow and other great towns in Scotland, as well as in Ireland, than anywhere in England? \* Before we in Scotland bring these charges against the management of the poor in England, let us look to the closes of Edinburgh, and the wynds of Glasgow, and thoroughly understand the character and habits, the diseases and mortality, of the unemployed poor, unprotected by the law, who gather there from all parts of the country; let us study the *condition* of the aged and disabled poor in all the smaller towns in Scotland; let us listen to the tales of misery which come to us from the remote parts of the Highlands and Islands, where so many thousands have been thrown out of employment by sudden changes in the value of the produce they can raise, and where L.3 a-year are distributed among a distressed population of above 2000 persons, less than a halfpenny a-head on the population; let us compare these things with the provisions for the poor, and *with the condition of the poor*, not only in England, but in many other Christian countries; and so far from priding ourselves on the *smallness of the sums* which are applied to this purpose in Scotland, I humbly apprehend we must honestly and candidly confess, that our parsimony in this particular is equally injurious to the poor and discreditable to the rich in Scotland.

*Thirdly*, It is assumed, in the passage above quoted, that the

\* See particularly the evidence of the Sheriff of Lanarkshire before the Committee on Combinations among Workmen, and Report on the Increase of Pauperism in Glasgow, p. 5. "In Ireland," says Mr Nicholls, "drunkenness appears to be much more common than in England, and everywhere increasing." (First Report, p. 9.)

The same tendency to intoxication, though without the concomitant violence or outrage, was observed by Messrs Fullarton and Baird in the destitute Highlanders, as by Mr Nicholls and others in the lowest Irish.—(Fullarton and Baird, p. 21.)

It is indeed a general fact, which ought always to be kept in view in all speculations regarding the poor, that whatever reduces men to a state of hopeless destitution and degradation, uniformly disposes them to intemperance as well as improvidence. There are hardly any (whatever their former character may have been) who, in these circumstances, can long resist the temptation of intoxicating liquors when in their power. Whatever raises or maintains them above that state of degradation, will tend to fortify them against that temptation. If it were true that protection against destitution generally and naturally leads to intemperance, the English, Dutch, and German poor (all of whom live under the protection of efficient poor laws) must long before this time have acquired that character in a far greater degree than the Scotch or Irish; but I fear there can be no doubt of the truth being directly the reverse of this.

parochial assistance bestowed in England is "received with discontent, and the claims brought forward in a spirit of rapacity and extortion." But, although there may be individual cases of this kind, I think no one who reads the statements in the Reports of the Commissioners, of the generally cheerful and contented spirit with which, in all parts of the country, after the operation of the new Poor Law was understood, the poor have submitted to the change,—can suppose these charges, even if we were to admit them to be a sufficient ground for legislation, to be generally well founded. The following, for example, is the statement of a practical man, "twenty years in parochial office uninterruptedly," and Vice-Chairman of one of the Unions, and he gives it as the opinion also of all his colleagues in office. "The labourers are more industrious, contented, and happy; the aged and the infirm, the widow and orphan, never apply to us in vain, but in the fulness of their hearts return us their thanks with blessings."\*

If I had wished to argue this question by reference to the feelings engendered among the poor, by the mode in which they see the Christian duty of charity obeyed by the regulations in force in this country for their relief, I could have produced many an instance of the "sore hearts of widows and orphans," of the "prayers for death and judgment," and other indications of intense mental suffering among the most unfortunate of the poor, which might well weigh in the balance against the alleged discontent and rapacity of the English poor; I can truly say, that I have heard "the cry unto the Lord" from many such dying sufferers which we are warned "may be a sin unto us;" but I am anxious to address myself to the understanding, not to the feelings of the reader; and trust only to the evidence of reason and experience, as to the circumstances, and the institutions, under which all the evils of poverty are most effectually and permanently controlled.

What has often been said of the poor, accustomed to depend on charity, losing the habit and the love of industry, has been most grossly exaggerated. It is contradicted by the almost uniform tenor of the Reports made to the Poor-Law Commissioners, since the out-door allowances to the able-bodied have been gradually stopped in England. I have watched the progress of hundreds, whom I knew to be dependent for a time, during youth, or sickness, or adversity, partly on parochial assistance, and partly (what has always appeared to me much more demoralizing) on precarious private charity. I have assisted some of these after they had been cast off (in consequence of imputations on their

character) by those on whom they chiefly depended ; and have had the satisfaction of seeing them, as they grew up, or regained employment, or recovered strength, take and maintain their places as industrious and *independent* members of society.

Another class of reasoners on this subject are very apprehensive, that the existence of a legal provision for the poor must weaken the ties of domestic attachment, and make the poor less careful of the comforts of their relations ; and it has even been stated by legislators as an argument against introducing Poor Laws into Ireland, that by leaving the poor unprotected in old age, and thereby “ exposing them to vicissitude and suffering,” you call forth the feelings of their children, which will generally prompt them to do something for their support ;\*—the true practical application of which doctrine is, that those aged persons among the poor who have no children, or none who choose to support them (and the same applies to orphan children), ought to be left to perish, and thought a useful sacrifice to the interests of the community.

But can any man of ordinary observation of the world suppose, that destitution, or the want of the ordinary comforts of life, is either necessary or favourable to the growth of domestic affections ? “ Are the people of England,” asks Mr Revans, “ worse parents, children, friends, or neighbours, than the people of any other country ? Are they more brutal in their habits ? Do they exhibit a general carelessness about the sufferings of others ? Perhaps a very fair test is the comparative extent and atrocity of crimes of violence on the person ; if so, I think the moral statistics of England will bear comparison with those of any country in the world.” It may be added, are the higher ranks of any country, who are exempt from those “ vicissitudes and suffering,” which are thought so necessary to develope the domestic affections of the poor, devoid of those affections ?

The truth is, that these affections are, fortunately for human happiness, limited to no rank or condition of society ; but it is most important in all speculations regarding poverty and its effects, to remember, that the effect of extreme destitution on the general conduct of man is *brutalising* ; it is to deaden, more or less, the sensibility to all feelings of a higher order than the sensual appetites. Instances of heartless indifference to parents and other relatives are, I am sorry to say, very frequent among the poorest of the natives of Scotland, even although tolerably well educated, and of regular habits ; and the desertion of their

\* See Examination of Dr Doyle, before the Committee of the House of Commons on Irish Poor Laws.

wives and families in circumstances of destitution by Irishmen of the lowest rank, so far as I can judge from pretty extensive observation of their habits in this country, instead of being less frequent, is *much more frequent* than by the native Scotch or English.

But, even if it were true that the virtue of domestic affection is brought more prominently into action by refusing assistance to the poor, should we be justified on that account, in excusing ourselves from acts of charity, or from exercising our reason as to the mode, in which charity may be applied most uniformly and effectually for the relief of misery? I apprehend that this argument, if it proves any thing, proves a great deal too much, inasmuch as it is fairly applicable against all descriptions of charity. And I apprehend farther, that if we are to excuse ourselves from relieving misery, because good effects may result from it, we may as well at once proclaim ourselves at liberty to "do evil, that good may come of it."

IV. But there is another argument against the poor laws, on which some of the economists place their chief reliance, viz. That they interfere with the profitable application of capital.

"The Poor Laws," says Mr Malthus, "raise the price of provisions, and lower the price of labour." "The farmer pays to the poor rates, for the encouragement of a bad and unprofitable manufacture" (in the case of the poor being set to work) "what he would otherwise have employed on his own land with infinitely more advantage to his country. In the one case, the funds for the maintenance of labour are daily diminished, in the other, daily increased." "The obvious tendency of assessments for the employment" (it might be added, for the relief) "of the poor, is to decrease the real funds for the maintenance of labour in any country."\* And on these texts there have been many commentaries, in and out of Parliament.

But, without pretending to much acquaintance with this science, I think it easy to shew, that the question of the influence of the poor rates on the funds available for the maintenance of profitable labour, must hinge on that regarding their connexion with population, which has been already discussed.

I can conceive a country, in which there should be no application of capital, except to profitable industry, or to the pleasures of those possessing it; no money laid out in any form on persons unable to work, or whose labour affords no return to those expending it. Without stopping to inquire whether such a country can actually exist, peopled by human beings, I suppose its existence. Tracing it from its commencement, it is plain that such

\* On Population, book iii. chap. 6.

a country would, for a time, make rapid progress in wealth and population. But it is also plain, that all the inhabitants could not be profitable servants of the capitalists; those administering to their pleasures only would not always be wanted; nor could any of the inhabitants continue profitable to them during their whole lives. There being no provision for those who were occasionally out of employment, nor for those disabled by age, injury, or disease, nor for the widows or orphans of those who died in early or middle life, there would necessarily be, as the population came to press on the means of subsistence, according to the principles already stated, a growth of misery and poverty contemporaneous with the increase of wealth and population. This is a burden which will always attach itself, in one form or another, to any labour that is done by human beings. This misery and poverty, being allowed no claim on the capital of the country, would soon make inroads on the wages of labour; it would soon appropriate to itself much of the price paid for labour to the most virtuous and best disposed of the labourers; and still the relief afforded would be very uncertain, irregular, and inadequate. The misery and destitution of one part of the population (particularly as towns grew and employments became unhealthy) would at least keep pace with the increase of wealth in the rest; and if the great object of political science is, not merely that there should be many citizens, nor that there should be rich citizens but "*ut cives feliciter vivant*," the state of the nation would soon reflect no credit on the science of its governors. But the main question, as regards the ultimate result of the experiment is, How would the "principle of population" act in such a country? If it be true, as has been stated, and I think proved, that moral restraint never does operate effectually where there is much unrelieved misery, the progress of the unproductive or partially productive, and destitute part of the population, would be much more rapid than that of the productive part, and the nation would be ultimately burdened with a mass of indigence and wretchedness sufficient to cripple all its energies.\*

Farther, in such a country, there would not only be much unrelieved misery, but, after a time, discontent, turbulence, and agitation; and capital and credit, "the most timid of created things," would soon disappear from it.

What avails it to Ireland at this moment, that she has millions of hands able and willing to labour, and large tracts of rich uncultivated land, and every facility for manufactures and com-

\* I would beg the reader seriously to consider whether some of the statements already made, and those to be found in the sequel, as to the state of the poor in Glasgow, do not in a great measure realize this description.



merce,—when the moral condition of her people is such, that no capitalist will trust his money among them? Her condition is just that which, in my humble judgment, would soon be the lot, and the deserved punishment, of any nation which should resolve, that its “funds for the maintenance of labour” should never be applied except directly to the profit or pleasure of their possessors.

On the other hand, if it be true, as I firmly believe, that a legal provision for the disabled and destitute poor,—simply because it is a certain, and uniform, and permanent provision, and because, therefore, it prevents the degeneration of habits which destitution would otherwise produce,—is an effectual preventive check on population, then a nation which regularly devotes a portion of its capital to the relief of misery and destitution, although its progress in wealth may seem to be retarded for a time, may always expect to have its population not only more comfortable, happier, and more contented, but more nearly adjusted to the demand for labour; and thus to escape, first the burden, and then the agitation and dangers, of redundancy, such as were witnessed in England two centuries and a half ago, and such as we now witness in Ireland.

In this way, I see no difficulty in explaining, what unquestionably is the fact, that while the want of a poor rate in Ireland has certainly proved no effectual assistance to the capitalist, the presence even of an excessive and injudiciously administered poor rate has not prevented England from attaining her present position, not merely as the richest nation of the world, but as that in which the labouring part of the population bears the *smallest* proportion to that part of it which is exempt from the necessity of labour.

The wealth of a nation is not the result of a mere process of arithmetic. It is the work of human hands, and is guided by the impulse of human feelings; and it is in vain to attempt to separate the questions which regard its growth and progress, from those which concern the numbers, and habits, and comforts, and moral condition of those by whom it is produced; and therefore, it appears to me, that the question as to the effect of poor laws upon the wealth of a country turns on that which we have already considered, concerning the influence of the mode of provision for the destitute on the principle of population.

Connected with this argument is the assertion, that poor laws always lower, and that their absence raises, the wages of labour. To this, it may be thought sufficient to reply, that if the presence of poor rates is a cause of low wages, Ireland and the Highlands can testify, that their absence is no security for high

wages;\* or to refer to the statement of Mr Senior, that, "with respect to money wages, the *superiority* of the English agricultural labourer over the labourers of almost all the rest of Europe, is very marked." But this point may be elucidated a little farther.

That, in countries otherwise well regulated, wages will be somewhat higher on account of the absence of poor rates, is easily understood; because there is no other fund, to be depended on for the payment of those burdens, which I have already stated as naturally attaching themselves to all human labour; those which age, sickness or infirmity, and premature death, necessarily entail on some at least of the labourers and their families, in every community. In so far as the wages of labour are kept down by poor rates, the effect of these may be said to be, to reserve a part of the payment which the labourer would otherwise receive, in order to meet demands which the uncertainty of all human affairs may probably impose on him; in short, to act as a national benefit society for the advantage of labourers, equalizing a burden which may, indeed, prove slight to any one, but which may fall with such weight as to crush him entirely, and for which it is, therefore, his interest and that of his country that he should compound. In the case of those labourers, whose services are required for necessities of life, and therefore always in demand, and whose employment is healthy, if they are instructed in their moral duties, such provision for these contingencies is of less importance and less required; and, therefore, in the agricultural districts of Scotland, if assessments were general, it is not to be expected that they would rise so high as materially to depress the wages. But on occasion of changes throwing many labourers out of employment, and more constantly in manufactures and in great towns, where the services of labourers are required for luxuries, and subject to the variations of caprice and fashion, and to commercial embarrassments, and where employments are unhealthy and life precarious, these contingencies become much more formidable; and unless some such permanent security against them exists, great numbers of labourers, and the women and children dependent on great numbers of them, will be necessarily often reduced to a precarious and destitute mode of life. And if the natural effect of such a mode of life is found by *experience* to be,

\* "Among the Irish peasantry," says Mr Nicholls, "a man cannot obtain his living as a day labourer."—A large number of labourers are now, for a great portion of the year, idling about without occupation." (First Report on the State of Ireland, p. 8 and 18. In the Highlands and Islands, say Messrs Fullarton and Baird, where the Poor Laws are merely nominal, "there are many labourers, but the employers of labourers are few and far between; and the reward of labour just sufficient to keep soul and body together." (Op. cit. p. 17.)

to give an unhealthy stimulus to population (as we see in Ireland, and in the Highlands and Islands), then the number of labourers in all lines of industry becomes excessive, and wages are permanently depressed, as we see them to be there, without any counterbalancing advantage. Thus we find that the ultimate effect of a poor rate on the wages of labour, turns likewise on its effect on the principle of population, which has been already considered.

I would only add here, that, if the depressing effect of the English poor rate on the wages of labour had been really injurious, the natural effect would have been, that many English labourers would by this time have sought employment in the neighbouring countries, and we in Scotland should have been overrun by them, instead of the Irish, the reverse of which is the fact.

V. There is yet another class of reasoners on this subject, who distrust the efficacy of any measures for the benefit of the poor, which go merely to the relief of physical suffering; and trust to "Religious and moral Education" as the only effectual remedy for this and all other evils of the social condition of our species. I should sincerely lament if any thing that I have said should be construed into disregard or contempt of their opinions. But I beg to say, that, in order that religious instruction may produce its due effect, the seed must fall on soil so far prepared for its reception. The philanthropist and the legislator can aspire to no higher object, in this department of their labours, than to perform this preliminary duty. Occasional religious feelings exist in all ranks of society, and perhaps their most striking manifestations are in the lowest; it is easy to excite the sense of human dependence and of human unworthiness in the very outcasts of society; but all experience teaches us, that we are not to expect such feelings to regulate the character, and permanently influence the conduct, of those who are incessantly struggling for existence, and are unable to command any of the comforts, and enjoyments, and decencies of life.\* A certain degree of physical comfort is essential to the permanent development, and habitual influence over human conduct, of any feelings higher than our sensual appetites. The exclamation of the Irish murderer, on seeing the gallows at which he was to suffer, expresses, I verily believe, the only feelings with which many of his brave countrymen, simply by reason of their destitution, habitually regard the

\* On this point it is hardly possible to have statistical information; but I would beg those who may have doubts in regard to it, fairly to investigate the cases of the most destitute natives of Edinburgh with whom they may meet, and, comparing them with others in better circumstances, to judge for themselves, whether their destitution can reasonably be ascribed to deficiency of religious instruction; or whether that deficiency, if it exist, may not more reasonably be ascribed to destitution.

approach of death,—“ She'll save me many a wet foot and hungry belly.”

When it is said, therefore, that all our efforts to improve the condition of the poor will be ineffectual without the aid of Religion, I willingly assent to the statement ; but add, that Religion itself will fail to influence permanently the conduct of the most destitute of our species, without the preliminary assistance of human charity. It was not without reason, nor without a provident regard for the infirmities of human nature, that Charity was assigned so high a place among the Christian virtues.

At this moment, if there were ample church accommodation in all parts of Edinburgh, I am satisfied that there is a large, although fluctuating, body of the most destitute of the inhabitants, whose mode of life has been already described, who never would avail themselves of it ; not for want of disposition, but simply because they have not clothes with which they could make their appearance there.

In regard to education independent of Religion, whatever effect it may have on the habits, or on the enjoyments, of those of the lower orders, who are in no want of the necessities of life (and to many of them I believe it is a great blessing), I should say, from any thing I have seen of the poor, that its importance, either for good or evil, to that class who are likely to require parochial aid, has been very much exaggerated. The wish of George III., that every man in his dominions might be able to read his Bible, was a noble and patriotic sentiment ; and I believe it expresses the only kind of education which can ever be expected to take effect on the minds and conduct of those, whose mental and bodily energies must be continually occupied in the means of procuring the first necessities of life. A more extended education may be given to such persons in youth, but it does not influence their conduct in after life. “ *L'Éducation est peu de chose,*” says an intelligent French author (Michaux), “ *quand les hommes sont toujours aux prises avec les premiers besoins de la vie.*” “ When a man's whole faculties are strained to the utmost from sunrise to sunset, to procure subsistence, he has neither leisure, aptitude, nor desire for information.”\* I know that this doctrine is not popular with many benevolent men in this country, but I have had too much experience of its truth to doubt of its being strictly applicable to a great majority of mankind.

Again, even supposing that we could give to the poor as complete religious and moral education as the higher ranks enjoy, is it reasonable to expect, from what we know of the corruption of human nature, and from what we see of the conduct of those

\* Symon's Arts and Artizans, &c.

higher ranks, that their vice and folly would be so eradicated or subdued, and their conduct so regulated by wisdom and foresight, as to relieve them of their dependence on the charity of their more fortunate brethren? And if we could reasonably entertain that expectation in future, would it be wise, or prudent, or even just, to act on it immediately; and when we are surrounded by every description of human suffering, to think ourselves relieved from the simple and obvious duty of charity? To me it seems obvious, that there is no panacea for human poverty and suffering, any more than for human maladies; and that, looking to the workings of the mighty principle of population, to the dominion of "time and chance" over this world, and to the seeds of moral evil which are implanted in all our breasts, we never can anticipate the time, when our duty to our fellow-men will consist only in such cultivation of their minds as may furnish them with an *antidote* to suffering; that we must make preparation for the *relief* of much misery which we shall never be able to *prevent*; and that we sin against reason as well as Religion, if we suppose, that any instruction which man can give to man, can ever absolve him from the simple and practical duty of "clothing the naked and feeding the hungry."

Having said so much in answer to the objections that have been stated to the principle of a poor rate, I have next, much more briefly, to enumerate the manifest advantages which this plan of relieving the sufferings of poverty possesses over all others, and which, in my humble opinion, ought to be quite sufficient to reconcile the people of Scotland to an uniform system of assessment, adequate to the purpose of giving such relief to those sufferings, as undoubtedly is given in England and in other countries of Europe.

I. A legal system of relief, which the poor are entitled to claim, is the only one which, in a complex state of society, where great numbers of the rich and poor live widely separate, is truly effectual in preserving a large portion of the poor from misery and degradation. Experience unequivocally demonstrates, that, in that state of society, many of the rich will always, under one excuse or another, neglect the duty of voluntary charity altogether. Those who do not, have always so great difficulty, particularly in great towns, in ascertaining the real character and wants of those whom they relieve, that they must necessarily run a risk of frequent misapplication of their charity; and, meeting with many instances of this, they have seldom perseverance to continue their exertions. The subscribers to voluntary public charities in large towns see little or nothing of the sufferings

which they contribute to relieve ; their charity is not stimulated by the emotion of sympathy, nor cheered by the accents of gratitude ; they are allured to works of charity, as an interesting amusement, rather than prompted to them by a sense of obligation ; and their bounty is liable to vicissitudes, more like the caprices of fashion than the steady operations of duty. Whether this be the true explanation or not, we have ample evidence of the tried inefficacy of the voluntary system of charity in large towns, even where there is no want of benevolent feeling among the higher ranks.

There is no nation more generous than the Irish, but we have seen that the poor of Dublin, unprotected by a legal provision, have fallen into a state of destitution and misery which it is painful to contemplate ; and the funds of the mendicity association are often so deficient, that it is only by periodical exhibitions of large bodies of these wretched creatures in the streets, and by exciting the fear of overwhelming mendicity, that the managers are enabled to carry on their system. Many of the most benevolent citizens of Edinburgh have expressed to me their astonishment at the statement which I have made of the extent of suffering and destitution existing here, and some have expressed doubts of its accuracy ; but as I possess the records of the application of the subscription recently raised (March 1840) for the relief of destitution in Edinburgh, and can therefore refer to not less than 2000 families who have been visited and found in want of the first necessities of life, and to great numbers of others nearly similarly situated, whom the subscription could not reach, I can give sufficient proof of the inefficacy of the voluntary system in Edinburgh, in preserving a very large part of the population from abject destitution and consequent suffering, *wholly unknown to the great body of the richer inhabitants*. What has voluntary charity done, or what can any reasonable man expect that it ever can do, for the rapidly increasing, and still more rapidly degenerating, population of the wynds of Glasgow ? In Paris, I have heard it stated by the Secretary to the Conseil des Hospitaux (who have all the legal charities under their control), as a principle universally admitted, that nothing but the funds raised by taxation (now amounting to 12,000,000 francs, or about half a million Sterling annually) could preserve the city in a condition habitable for the higher ranks of society. In Dundee, “ the eyes of the public were opened to the (alleged) evils of assessment in 1825, and it was resolved that a strenuous effort should be made to resort to the older and better system of supporting the poor by voluntary contributions. The *experiment*” (as might have been expected) “ *unfortunately failed*. The support on which our session relied *was not afford-*

ed, and a debt was incurred in the abortive attempt, which hung as a weight on the parish for several years.”\*

If the voluntary system of charity were acting efficiently in Edinburgh, we should have clergymen and elders making themselves acquainted, as in country parishes, with the character and wants of all their parishioners; but although such duty is done by some of the clergy with zeal and assiduity, it is manifestly impossible that it can be done constantly; and by the greater number of the elders it is never done at all. But it is unnecessary to dwell on this point, because I hold it to be quite certain, that if the voluntary system of charity, either in Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Dundee, had been effectual in maintaining the poor of these cities in tolerable comfort, we never should have seen epidemic fever affecting probably one-sixteenth of the population as in Edinburgh, or one-sixth as in Glasgow and Dundee, in little more than two years.

In those parts of the country of Scotland where the proprietors are resident, and the demand for labour pretty uniform, it is true that the habits and condition of the lower people are much better; but much of this apparent superiority depends, as I believe, on the continual absorption of the more destitute of the people by the great towns. At all events, the utter *absence of security* for the lives and comforts of the lowest of the people appears from this, that wherever the two conditions above stated are withdrawn,—where the proprietors are absent, or the demand for labour falls off,—the people fall into the most abject misery; as in many parts of the Highlands, and Islands, where “the poor law is little more than a dead letter,” and where “the people are in the very extremity of human wretchedness, and unless the means of permanent relief be speedily devised, the consequences cannot be contemplated without horror.” Under these privations and sufferings, a noble race of men is now undergoing a miserable degradation.†—“One or at most two unfavourable seasons have reduced *nearly the whole population* of these countries to a state of

\* Report on the Pauperism of Dundee, 1839, p. 22.

† “The people of Glensheil were at one time distinguished above those around them for their superior physical qualities. The men were of tall stature, strong, active, and courageous; the women were comely and graceful, and both had an extraordinary taste for poetry and music. Now, however, a long course of poverty, with scanty fare and inadequate clothing, have greatly deteriorated this remarkably fine race of people.”—(Fullarton and Baird, p. 45.) If any thing could increase the interest which the sufferings of this portion of our countrymen ought to excite in our minds, it is the striking fact, that “in the whole of the Highlands and Mainland parishes to which these remarks apply, the face of a soldier or policeman, as such, is not known; and that in spite of all the poverty and wretchedness to which, especially within these few years, the people have been exposed, there has not been the slightest indication of riot or disturbance.”—Ib. p. 22.

destitution, so complete as to outstrip all the efforts of the landlords to relieve them, and make it imperative on them to appeal to the charities of their countrymen.\* In these circumstances it is plain that, under the continued operation of the voluntary system, while *pauperism*, properly speaking, has been repressed, landlords as well as tenants have been gradually reduced to a state of *mendicity*.

II. While the legal system of relief is the only one that is *effectual* in regard to the lower orders, it is likewise the only one that is *just* in regard either to them or to the higher. The voluntary system has been justly characterized as an effectual expedient for "relieving the uncharitable at the expense of the charitable." In every large town, it is found that a large proportion of the higher ranks resolutely abstain from every description of charity; and in Edinburgh, in particular, it is observed, that the individuals who support all the charitable institutions are a very limited number, in comparison with those who are reached by an assessment.

This becomes more nationally important, when it is remembered, that the effect of this inadequacy of voluntary charity among the rich is to throw an excessive burden on the industrious, and even on the poorer, classes. Wherever the voluntary system exists, the earnings of these classes are habitually divided, to a very great extent, with the unemployed and impotent poor, who are unheeded by the higher ranks, and thus the whole body of the lower orders is depressed. This takes place to a degree that is little known in Scotland; we have evidence of it in the statement formerly quoted, of the Managers of the Charity Workhouse, that, "were it not for the assistance given by the suffering poor to *each other*," the existence of many of the pensioners of that establishment could not be maintained; but in Ireland, as the evidence of Dr Doyle abundantly shews, this is an evil of the first magnitude. "Of the L.1,500,000 or L.2,000,000," says he, "now supporting the Irish poor, *nearly the entire* falls on the farmers and other industrious classes." "I could not, were I to speak till the sun went down, convey a just picture of the benevolence prevailing in the hearts of the middling class in Ireland. The poor are now supported almost entirely by them, although they form a class not over numerous, and subject to great pressure." Again, speaking of the charity even of the poorest classes to one another, he says, "you cannot be among them for a day without witnessing the existence of it in the most touching manner. But, when you ascend to the higher ranks, you find many *individuals* of great goodness, and

\* Fullarton and Baird, Op. cit. pp. 27, 51.



of singular beneficence and charity ; but you find a much greater number who seem to be very anxious to throw the whole burden on the industrious people, and who seem to be indifferent to all the wants of the poor."

III. The legal system of relief is the only one which may always be expected (under such regulations as may be easily enforced) to act uniformly in proportion to the wants, and in adaptation to the character, of the sufferers. It is only by giving the poor the right to claim relief, and then employing *paid* inspectors (checked by higher authorities) to investigate their cases, that these objects can be accomplished. The irregularity, as well as general deficiency, of voluntary relief, must always render it both more degrading and demoralizing to the poor themselves, and less beneficial to the public.

The advantages of the legal provision in this respect are very satisfactorily stated in the Report on the Danish Poor Law, furnished by that Government, and published by the Poor-Law Commissioners. "At the introduction of the new system, it was natural to direct attention to the possible injurious effects of a public arrangement, which made it a compulsory duty for each citizen to contribute (according to the judgment of authorities appointed for the purpose) all that the indigent members of the state seemed to require ; inasmuch as the sluggard, the spendthrift, and the profligate, might thereby find opportunity to support themselves at the expense of the industrious and frugal. But, on the other hand, we must recollect, that we do not get rid of these evils by leaving the needy to depend on the charity of their fellow-citizens. On the contrary, he who would rather live at the cost of others than support himself by his own industry and economy, will often find more encouragement to this from the irregular help he expects to obtain from his fellow-citizens, who do not scrutinize either his necessities or his behaviour, and do not compel him to work,—than from the help given by a public authority, *which narrowly investigates his want, has inspection over his conduct, and keeps him under a corresponding discipline.* It was considered as good policy, besides, that the state, merely from motives of public safety, should secure to each individual the possibility of having the first wants of nature supplied without resorting to crime. But, in order to attain this object, the support of the poor must rest on a more certain basis than the funds belonging to each place's poor-chest,—or occasional revenues assigned without any fixed mode of determining what is really necessary,—or the charity of private individuals,—could afford. And as, moreover, begging (which, if the support of the poor is not secured by public arrangement, seems excusa-

ble, on the ground of the insufficiency of other means of relief) is attended with so many inconveniences and burdens for the inhabitants, and is, besides, such a fruitful source of moral corruption, it was considered advantageous, even for that part of the community which did not stand in need of help, that, by means of a public establishment for charity, such evils should be got rid of.”\*

There is here a difference in the opinions acted on in the administration of the Poor Laws in Scotland and in England, which demands careful consideration. In Scotland, it is very generally maintained, that, if destitute persons are found to be of bad character, that is a sufficient ground for refusing them relief;† whereas, in England, it is laid down by the Poor-Law Commissioners, that, “in the administration of relief (*i. e.* in the question whether relief should be given or not), nothing of past demerit, nothing but the simple destitution of the party, and his necessity, ought to be regarded.”‡ I have no difficulty in stating my opinion, not only that this last is the wiser principle on which to act, but that it is quite essential to the proper management of the affairs of the poor, that it be uniformly acted on. As this is not obvious at first sight, a little explanation is requisite.

1. As to the question of morality, we cannot constitute ourselves judges of the demerit of individuals. All human characters are mixed, and a very little observation of human life is enough to shew, that whether the better or the worse part of the dispositions of an individual, especially of the lower orders, shall determine his fate, or the character he is to bear in the world, is very often a question decided by contingencies altogether beyond his control. When the characters even of the most hardened criminals, or of the most abandoned sinners, are fairly investigated, it always appears that there are some redeeming qualities which, under other circumstances, might have been as productive of good as those which have become predominant have been of evil. There is no affectation of sentiment, but simple truth and good feeling (as applicable to many individual cases), in the reflection of one of Sir Walter Scott’s most amiable characters, on the loss of female innocence, “Who could have expected such a flood of evil, from one grain of human leaven, in a mind that was kind and candid and generous?”—or, in the words of Miss Edge-

\* Report of Commissioners for 1834, Appendix F, p. 307.

† Thus, in the Report of the Out-Pension Committee of the Managers of the West Church Charity Workhouse (1837), it is recommended to subject the roll to a regular and periodical scrutiny, “for the purpose of *striking off all the dissipated and undeserving without exception.*” If this were done by taking them into the workhouse, no objection could be made to the proposal; but this is certainly not the alternative generally approved in such cases.

‡ Report on certain complaints of the Vestry of St Nicholas, Deptford, by Charles Mott, Assistant-Commissioner.

worth, "Those who have been bred in the lap of affluence, whom the breath of Heaven has never visited too roughly, whose minds have been guarded from their earliest years, even with more care than their persons, are not competent to judge of the temptations to which the youth of the lower ranks of life may be exposed." On the other hand, it is a consideration which must occur to every reflecting mind, and which may well convince us of the justice and wisdom of the sacred rule, "Judge not that ye be not judged,"—that even in the highest and purest characters that we meet with in the world, we can not only detect failings, but can often observe such evil propensities as, under certain circumstances, might have stamped them with infamy, and caused irretrievable degradation. It is wrong to dwell on the "fears of the brave, and follies of the wise," with the view of vilifying and degrading our notions of human nature; but it is right to remember them, with the view of strengthening and regulating our endeavours to perform the great duty of charity.

The truth is, that the distinction between good and evil lies in the different parts of the character and dispositions of every human being, not in different individuals of our species; and although we can easily see that in some the evil propensities greatly predominate, while in others they are effectually repressed, yet when we inquire carefully and candidly into the circumstances, moral or physical, which have led to the former result, in the case of any individual, we shall find it so exceedingly difficult to judge how much depended on his own voluntary determination, and how much on circumstances beyond his control, that, except in the case of *crime* (*i. e.* of obvious and demonstrable injury done to others), our only safe rule of judgment is to acquiesce in the sacred principle, "Vengeance is not ours." If we reserve our charity until we meet with human beings exempt from sinful propensities or indulgences on whom to bestow it, we may reserve it for the next world, for we assuredly shall not find fit objects for it in this. The vices of the poor are generally more prominent and offensive than those of the rich, but they are very often balanced by qualities which may even excite our admiration. The very same persons who disgust us by occasional, even by habitual intemperance, we shall often find, when called on for active exertion, to be faithful and brave; when merely deprived of their liberty, to be orderly, industrious, and religiously disposed; or when afflicted with disease, to be "grateful for sympathy, patient under privations and sufferings, candid in the admission of errors, and calm on the approach of death."

If we trace the origin of that course of life which fixes the character of profligacy on so many of the poor, we shall find that,

most generally, it may be ascribed to one of two causes, self-indulgence, or want of temper; and if we examine our own conduct, or that of those whom we most love and respect, how many of us can say that we have no such infirmity in these respects as might, in the circumstances of those we now condemn, have fixed on us the same reproach? If we have not been led into temptation, let us be thankful for the mercy; but let us not, therefore, think ourselves entitled to “denounce the vengeance of Heaven on those sins which our own rank and station in life remove us from all temptation of ever committing.” When any line of human conduct, inferring injury or misery to others, is proposed, or is defended, as a proper punishment of *sin*, we should remember who has told us, “Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone.”

2. Again, if we think ourselves justified in refusing relief on account of the sins of those claiming it, or of what we consider to have been their previous misconduct, the punishment we thereby inflict is often out of all proportion to the offence. We must indeed expect, that, in the struggle for employment in all lines of industry in such a country as this, the least deserving will generally be excluded; we shall very often find, for example, that intoxication is the immediate cause of the destitution of many; and we must expect, that when they are reduced to extreme destitution, the disposition to intoxication, whenever an opportunity presents itself, will be nearly irresistible. But, looking to what we see of this vice, and habitually excuse in those practising it in the higher ranks of society, can we be justified in saying, that this is a sufficient ground for withholding all assistance, and thereby reducing the miserable sufferer to the condition in which I have seen too many,—almost uniformly females (some formerly respectable, “none all evil”),—unable to procure such clothing as to enable them to go to hospital, or dismissed thence as incurable; refused aid from other charities, perishing of the effects of want and nakedness, and dependent only in their last moments on scanty assistance from companions a little more fortunate than themselves.\*

“And if a death of lingering pain,  
 “To shrive my sin be penance vain,  
 “Vain are your masses too!”

\* An instance, precisely of this kind, occurred to me in March 1840, of a young woman, formerly a servant in a respectable family, and never, as I have reason to believe, leading a vicious course of life, whom I found in the last stage of consumption, lying on the floor of a dark room, with a scanty covering of rags, her head resting on a stone. She assured me that she had had no other resting place for six weeks, and hardly any sustenance, but what had been given her by the poor widow with whom she lived, and who has 9d. a-week from the Charity Workhouse. She died there, before I could procure her admission to the Infirmary.

Some may say, that instances of such extreme wretchedness have a good effect in the way of example, on the morality of those who witness them; but this is not the kind of morality which we are taught by the Gospel; and the truth is, that they are witnessed by none, whose circumstances admit of their deriving any such benefit from them.

3. If we take upon ourselves to punish sin, by thus excluding sinners from the assistance of public charities, we shall very generally find, that we punish the innocent along with the guilty; we punish children along with parents;\* we punish in many instances neighbours and acquaintances among the poor themselves, who supply, in a certain degree, from their own scanty resources, the deficiency of other charity; and in many instances we punish a much larger number of the public, to whom such sufferers, rather than starve in silence, will make their wants known in some way or other, and who have not the means of granting relief with the same discrimination as public charities. At all events, proceeding on this principle, it is absolutely impossible for us to suppress one form or another of mendicancy.

4. Even if all these considerations are set aside, we cannot overlook the fact, that those whom we may regard on account of their intemperance or immorality, as unfit objects for legal relief, —or the relief of whom we may regard as encouragement to vice, —are just of that description of persons among whom fever and other epidemics are most apt to break out and to extend; and that this result can only be prevented by some improvement of their condition and comforts. In my opinion, then, for the sake of the morals, but quite certainly for the sake of the health of the community, it is most important, that the wants (well ascertained by inquiry) of the vicious poor should be promptly relieved, and that this should be done as much as possible out of the view of the public.

For all these reasons, it seems to me perfectly clear, that destitution ought to give the claim, and the moral demerits of applicants to public charities should always be regarded only as a *guide to the kind of relief which it will be most advisable to grant*; and here lies one of the chief advantages of well managed legal relief, that when such persons are really reduced to

\* During the inclement weather of spring 1838, I saw three young women with natural children on the breast, who were out of work, in a miserable state of destitution, and who were refused admission into the workhouses, and were very scantily relieved by the other charities here. After some weeks of severe suffering, the children all died, certainly of the effects of cold and imperfect nourishment. If any one supposes, that the effect of this sacrifice of innocent life was to improve the morals of these women or their associates, I can only say, that he knows nothing of the effect of real destitution on human character and conduct.

destitution, the workhouse is always at command, in which they can be relieved without the possibility of indulgence in their vicious habits, and without injury, physical or moral, to the rest of the community.

IV. Another very important advantage of the system of legal provision for the poor is, that it gives all ranks of the community a direct interest in their condition. We have seen that when the relief of the destitute, especially in large towns, is trusted chiefly to the voluntary system, it always happens, and on a fair estimate of human virtue, and of the time which persons of the higher ranks either can or will bestow on the affairs of the poor, we must expect that it always will happen, that there is a great deal of unrelieved suffering; and I think it appears distinctly from what has been said, that the evils, of which we hear so much, of *misapplied charity*, are trifling in comparison with those which this *unrelieved misery* involves. When these evils come to a height, as when a formidable epidemic breaks out, they excite public attention, great efforts are made, large sums subscribed, and the assistance which, given a short time before, would have preserved many lives, and served as an antidote to great part of the misery, is now only in time to mitigate sufferings which can no longer be arrested. When the epidemic subsides, public attention is directed to some other object, and after a brief period of comparative comfort, the poor relapse into their former obscurity and destitution; with a feeling deeply impressed on their minds, that they have no permanent protection from the rich, but become objects of attention only when it is apprehended that a portion of the evils which they endure may extend upwards to the more fortunate members of society.

On the other hand, when destitution and suffering of all kinds among the poor are admitted to have a legal claim to relief, no aggravation of the privations which they suffer can take place, without an immediate demand on the higher orders, and, to a certain degree, an abridgment of their luxuries. It becomes the obvious interest of landlords to look narrowly into the condition of the poor, and to take such measures as may be occasionally and obviously effectual to prevent the excessive population of their possessions, and thus protect themselves, and equalize the burden of the redundant population. Thus it has been, I have no doubt justly, observed, that under such a system as that of the English Poor Laws, no such extension of the practice of subletting farms as has taken place either in Ireland or in the Highlands and Islands, would ever have been permitted by the landlords. The law in England apportions a part of the profits of the landlord and of the higher ranks generally to the necessitous

occupiers of the land; and the assistance which is given works uniformly, silently, and surely, as part of the ordinary business of the country, preventing disease, and saving from degradation, knitting together all parts of the vast structure of society, and making it obvious to all ranks, that the whole must rise or fall together; maintaining thus the sense of self-respect even among the lowest of the people, and keeping up that standard of comfort, and those artificial wants, which form the true security to society, that the next generation shall not degenerate from the present.

From all that I have observed, or have been able to learn of the condition of the poor, and of the provisions for their support, on the Continent of Europe, I am confident that we may draw the same conclusions there, as are suggested by a comparison of the different parts of the British Empire. The conclusion which Mr Sadler drew from a review of the practice of the different nations of Europe, as to this matter, is exactly what might have been expected, from the principles which have been stated; viz. that wherever a legal provision does not exist for the poor, the only alternative is an extensive system of mendicity, under which there is uniformly much more misery, disorder, and vice. On the other hand, the countries in which there appears to be the least suffering, and the most comfortable general condition of the poor, are uniformly those in which an extensive legal provision for their support exists, and in general has long existed. The extensive collection of facts on this subject, published by the Poor-Law Commissioners,\* is by no means free from the usual error of mixing matters of opinion with matters of fact; and it is particularly deficient in details as to the actual *condition* of the lowest orders in these countries; on which point, as I have already observed, the whole question, both as to the attainment of the immediate objects of Poor Laws, and as to the prospect of their giving a permanent security against destitution, necessarily hinges;† but it is easy to extract from it sufficient evidence of the

\* Appendix F to Third Report for 1834.

† I cannot help expressing my surprise, that in the Queries circulated on this subject by the British Government, there were none which touched on the point of the actual *condition* of the people requiring or receiving public relief; no demand for statistical information on such points as these, What proportion of labourers or their families are out of employment during three or four months of the year? What proportion are obliged, during the winter, to sell their furniture and clothing? What proportion of women and children pass the winter without shifts or petticoats, shoes or stockings? What is the usual diet of this part of the population? In what proportion of cases are two or more families found huddled together, inhabiting corners instead of entire rooms? What are their diseases, what the mortality? What the usual progress of contagious fever when introduced among them? Without information on such points we have not the elements necessary for forming a precise judgment as to the efficacy of the existing system, either in relieving

propositions I have stated, and for this purpose, I shall avail myself chiefly of the abstract given in the Quarterly Review, vol. 54; premising only, that the statements in favour of the practical operation of the Poor Laws are more valuable as coming from men, who knew they were addressing a Government which had made strong declarations against them, and who, in several instances, had themselves strong prepossessions of that kind.

“ The establishment of a legal provision for the destitute poor, as the only means of securing society from the curse of unlimited mendicancy and vagrancy, so far from being, as many persons we believe are still erroneously persuaded, peculiar to British legislation, and an experiment introduced for the first time in the reign of Elizabeth, has existed, in some shape or other, from the very earliest period as a fundamental principle in the codes of nearly all European nations. We find it directly recognised in the Capitularies of Charlemagne :—‘ Mendici per regionem non permittantur. *Suos quæque civitas pauperes alito.*’—It is probable that, as the monastic establishments grew into opulence by multiplied endowments, the support of the poor fell almost wholly upon them, and relief from municipal or parochial funds came into desuetude, as well in other countries as in this.—After the suppression of these, the experience of the next half century proved that an adequate maintenance could only be afforded to the poor, and mendicancy be effectually extirpated, by a *compulsory* assessment, to which the legislature of England was obliged to resort in the 14th Eliz. c. 5; afterwards expanded, and remodelled in the celebrated 43d Eliz. The Scottish act of 1579—the ground-work of the present poor law in Scotland—proves that a similar necessity was felt about the same time, and a similar step taken, by the legislature of that country likewise,” although, since that time, it has been acted on in a very different spirit.

“ Mr Senior (in the Preface to the Report in question) divides the states of Europe into two classes :—1. Those in which the principle of the English system exists, namely, an acknowledgment of the *right* of every person to be rescued from destitution by the public; and, 2. Those in which the applicant’s *legal right* does not appear to be so distinctly acknowledged, but in which provision is nevertheless largely, and in many cases amply, made from public funds for their relief. The former class, as enumerated by Mr Senior, comprehends Norway, Sweden, Russia, Denmark, Mecklenburgh, Prussia, Wurtemberg, Bavaria, the Canton of Berne, and Saxony: the latter Holland, the Hanseatic human suffering, which is the first object, or in preserving the lower orders from a state of moral degradation and consequent improvidence, which I take to be the second object, and the ultimately beneficial effect, of a well regulated provision for the poor.



Towns, Belgium, France, Portugal, the Sardinian States, Frankfort, Austria, Venice, Greece, and Turkey." In several of the latter countries, however, the relief given is equally uniform, and carried to as great an extent as in the former, so that in these the distinction is truly nominal.

It appears from these papers, that it is in the countries inhabited by the great Gothic family of European nations, in the north of Europe and in Germany, that we must look for the true models in this department of civil policy; in the nations of the Celtic family, in Spain and Portugal, in Italy and in France, the care of the poor has attracted much less of the attention of government, and their condition is in every respect much worse.

In the best managed states it appears, that there are generally large *endowments* for the benefit of the poor, which of course lessen the amount of tax required for this purpose; and in most countries the sums raised are partly by indirect, partly by direct taxation. But these differences do not affect the principle of a poor law, because the effects, good or bad, of such a law on the people do not depend on the source from which the money comes (which is generally not known to those receiving it), but depend merely on the degree of confidence with which it can be anticipated as a resource in time of need.

"A full statement of the Swedish law is given by M. de Hartmansdorff, the Secretary of State for Ecclesiastical Affairs, and it appears to be similar in most points to that of Norway. Its principle is declared to be a compulsory assessment on all property for the relief of the infirm and helpless poor, and the employment of all that are able to work. Every parish has its almshouse for the aged, sick, and infirm; and food, clothing, and money are distributed to out-door paupers. The incurable sick, and those afflicted with contagious diseases, are supported in public hospitals, at the cost of their parish. The parish overseers are elected by the rate-payers. The clergyman presides at the board or vestry which administers the fund. The poor have an appeal from the vestry to the governors of the province, and thence to the king. The statements as to the working of the system are various, but we learn from the dispatches of Mr Bloomfield, that the number of paupers is 1 in 42 of the population (not 3 per cent.), and that there is little appearance of abject poverty; and from the report by Mr Liddell, Consul at Gottenburg, that he could observe no bad effect to have been produced on the industry of the labourers, their frugality, on the age at which they marry, nor on their domestic affections; and that "they exert themselves to remain independent."\*

“ The existing law in Denmark dates only from 1799, although a legal provision for the poor had existed at least since 1685. The kingdom is divided into poor districts, consisting of separate parishes in the country, in which relief is administered by a board consisting of the ministers, magistrates, and a few respectable inhabitants elected to the office. A general board of directors presides over all. The curate examines into the wants of paupers. An overseer, serving for three years, acts as the relieving officer and agent for the board. The infirm and helpless poor are supplied with food, clothing, lodging, fuel, and medical attendance. Such as are capable of work are made to perform it in or out of workhouses. The children are educated until they can be apprenticed or provided for. The funds are chiefly levied by assessment. A return in labour is required from all those who are capable of work.—The poor having been thus effectually provided for, and all excuse for mendicancy removed, begging is made punishable by confinement in the House of Correction.

“ This poor-law system of Denmark being of comparatively recent origin, it becomes interesting to ascertain its results after the lapse of about a third of a century. Mr Macgregor, British Consul, states the administration of the law to be defective, and to require amendment; and there has been there, as in this country, much discontent about the amount of the tax, and *opinions* given as to its future evil tendency; but, in spite of this, the system itself, he says,

“ ‘ Has answered an important object—that of *checking the growth of pauperism*. There is a slight improvement in the value of land; idle persons are seldom found; and there is sufficient work in which to employ the labouring population. Relief, or the expectation of it, has *not* been found to produce any sensible effect on the *industry* of the labourers generally,—nor upon their *frugality*. Nor are the poor laws instrumental in producing early marriages among the peasants.’ ” “ The *condition* of the poor,” he elsewhere states, “ has been materially improved through their agency, *a great deal of misery has been prevented or relieved*; and their operation has been most beneficial on different occasions when great numbers of working people were suddenly thrown out of employment.”\*

Another witness, author of a very detailed account of the existing law, states, that,

“ Before its introduction, the *distress was much greater*, and begging of the most importunate and rapacious kind, was quite common; the beggars, when their demands were not satisfied,

had recourse to insolence and threats, nay, even to acts of criminal vengeance." (How accurate a picture of the present state of Ireland!) "*This is no longer the case.* It is a fact, that poverty now appears in less striking features than it did before the introduction of the poor-law system."

"The actual system, wherever it has been ably and duly managed, has undoubtedly strengthened the ties between the higher and lower orders; as the Danish nation in general has a high sense of the benevolent intentions of Government."\* In Copenhagen, the proportion of the population receiving support from the poor-funds is about 1 in 17 of the population, or nearly 6 per cent.; in the country much less. The official report of the Danish Government states, that, since the compulsory provision has been introduced (and the benefits above stated been secured), "the burden of the poor tax has *not* been uniformly increasing."† It appears, also, that "there are funds accumulated in the general poor-chests for each bailiwick, which in some of them are considerable," and which are to be employed in the erection of workhouses,‡ and that the agricultural population of Denmark has not increased more than 26 per cent. since 1801, *i. e.* in 33 years, under this system.§

"In Russia proper, the peasants on each estate are the property of its lord, but he is under obligation to provide them with the means of support, and, in times of distress, to relieve them. On the estates belonging to the Crown, which are enormous, and every day increasing, a methodical system of parochial relief is established, each parish being compelled to supply its destitute poor, in poor-houses, with fuel, food, and clothing. In Courland, Esthonia, and Livonia, a similar compulsory system is established.

"In Prussia, it is the duty of the police to see that every person in distress is supplied with needful assistance,—if a stranger, from the provincial poor-fund; if a native, by the commune, or lord of the estate to which he belongs. Repayment is required where it is possible, and work in all cases from those capable of it. In the towns, the expense is defrayed out of the municipal funds, and the administration confided to a board. In the country, the village authorities levy a contribution from the inhabitants, as well as the owner of the estate. The occasional sick are relieved on the same plan as the impotent through infirmity, children and orphans. Settlement is acquired by residence, but unsettled poor are removable to their last place of settlement. The system is described as working well; universally succeeding in its effects on the comfort, condition, and character of the

\* Appendix F, &c. p. 275.

† Ibid. p. 274.

‡ Ibid. p. 308.

§ Ibid. p. 300.

inhabitants ; affording speedy and sufficient means of relief when necessary, and particularly as *securing the constant industry* of all the able-bodied inhabitants.\*

“ The Report from Saxony is not very clear, but the system seems generally to coincide with that of Denmark.

“ The principle of the law in Wurtemberg is briefly summed up by Sir G. Disbrowe. ‘ It is this ; no man can starve. Every native indigent person, unable to procure the necessary subsistence, can require that he shall be maintained, even though there should be no hope for an indemnity for the expense thereby incurred ;’† but, if able to work, he must do so. He will be remunerated according to his work. If idle and dissolute, he finds his way to a poor-house, not to live there on clover, but where he is compelled to work, and from which he can be delivered by good conduct and industry alone. These laws are represented as being of considerable antiquity. ‘ The kingdom of Wurtemberg,’ Mr Senior observes, ‘ appears to have been, as yet, eminently successful in reconciling a recognition of the right to relief, with economy in its distribution.’ ”

Pauperism is stated here to be decidedly on the *decrease*, those receiving relief having been 64,000 in 1820, and 50,000, or 1 in 30 of the population, in 1833 ; and “ there is a great aversion among common people to seeking relief from their parishes.”‡

“ The law of Bavaria requires each town, market-place, and village, to support its poor ; but villages may form unions for the purpose. The administration is confided to elective officers. Work is found for such as are in want of it. Relief is afforded, in poor-houses, to the helpless ; in money, to those who are in need of occasional help. Voluntary contributions, endowments, fines, and collections on various occasions, go to the poor-fund, which is made up to the required amount by compulsory assessment.

The copy of the Bavarian laws, and statement of their effects, given by Lord Erskine, is particularly deserving of attention. His replies to the general queries as to the effects which the receipt or expectation of relief have on the industry of the labourers,—on their frugality,—on the mutual dependence and affection of parents, children, and other relations, are simple and satisfactory. He says, of the Bavarian labourers, that they are industrious, they are frugal, they marry at various ages ; and that parents, children, and relatives, are “ generally affectionate towards each other.”§

\* Appendix F, &c. p. 425, *et seq.*

† Regulations relative to the Poor in Wurtemberg, &c. Appen. F, p. 521.

‡ Appendix F, &c. p. 510.

§ Ib. p. 556.

“ In all those states, a compulsory poor law exists, *precisely similar in character to that of England*; embracing its three great principles, namely, the relief of the infirm, the employment of the able-bodied, and the suppression of mendicancy and vagrancy; and in all, these laws are *carefully and uniformly carried into effect*. It will be observed, that these states comprehend the far larger half of Europe. Now, what is the general result of the system, as practised throughout this extensive range of territory, and among nations varying much in their manners, habits, and institutions? Mr Senior observes, and we consider the admission a very valuable one, as coming from one who is averse to poor rates of every description, that—

“ In no country, except, perhaps, the Canton de Berne, has compulsory relief produced evils resembling either in intensity or extent, those which we have experienced in England, and in the majority of nations which have adopted it, the existing system appears to *work well*.”\* I already alluded to the deficiency of details in all these reports as to the actual *condition* of the poor. But in all these countries, it is to be observed, that mendicity is nearly suppressed, and we know also, that contagious fever makes little progress, for we see here, year after year, medical men from Germany, who come to Scotland and Ireland to study that form of fever, of which they have little experience at home. From these two facts we may conclude, with perfect confidence, that the general condition of the poor must be much better than in the great towns of Scotland or Ireland, in which, if mendicity were suppressed by the strong arm of the law, without very considerable improvement in the comforts of the people, we should soon see such an increase of fever as has always followed, in them, unusual scarcity of food. Indeed, “ without a systematic and effectual plan for relief of the poor, the idea of discountenancing mendicity is infinitely too cruel, as observed by Lord Hale, to be practicable any where.”† That there is, in all the countries now mentioned, when compared with Italy, Spain, Ireland, or even Scotland, a general absence, not only of mendicity, but of abject poverty, all travellers attest.

“ The reports from many other states of Europe exhibit a variety of systems established by law for the relief of the poor, in which the claim of the pauper is not so directly recognised,—but where the poor are in fact always relieved in case of necessity, and the funds provided more or less by *compulsory assessments*.

\* Quarterly Review (loc. cit).

† Sadler on Ireland, p. 223. He must mean to be practicable *without cruelty*. I am afraid we should have no difficulty in shewing, in Scotland, that it is practicable, to some extent, *with cruelty*, particularly to women and children.

“ In Hamburgh a general institution for the poor is supported by endowments, voluntary contributions, and considerable advances from the state, that is, from the municipal taxes.—The want of a workhouse for the employment of indolent paupers is severely felt. The regular out-door relief in money amounted, in 1832, to very nearly 4s. a-head, on a population of 130,000. The poor institutions of Bremen resemble those of Hamburgh, but appear to be better administered.

“ In Holland the charge of the relief of the pauper rests with the parish overseer of his religious sect ; but when their means are sufficient, the local administration supplies the deficiency from municipal funds. In fact, therefore, except in the existence of very large endowments, and voluntary contributions from the members of the different religious sects and charitable societies, the system differs little from the compulsory law of relief in Denmark and the German states.” The annual expenditure on the poor for the last twelve years has amounted to above 6,200,000 guilders, *i. e.* above L.500,000, or about 4s. 4d. a-head of the entire population, and the annual number of persons relieved has amounted to above 240,000, *i. e.* above one in ten of the whole population (2,148,000). In this, however, the expense of the hospitals is included.\*

“ The results of the present poor-law system on the character and condition of the inhabitants, may be considered as on the whole satisfactory. No person when distress is proved, suffers absolute want, and the improved instruction of the lower classes produces very salutary effects.”†

In some of these countries where so much is done for the poor, Mr Senior and others argue, that this has been only of late years, and they appear to look forward to what they think a better time, when all these institutions will be abandoned, and the poor left to themselves. But it is certain, that in several of them (*e. g.* Wurtemberg), and these now the best regulated,—the general system is of old standing, although there have been recent modifications. In the Canton of Berne, it appears that the practice of paying part of the wages of labour out of the poor rate had been introduced, as in England, and occasioned considerable embarrassment ; but it is certain, that in all the German Cantons of Switzerland, where the generally comfortable condition of the poor cannot fail to attract the attention of travellers, there has long been in operation a system of poor laws, not only similar to the spirit, but actually borrowed from the letter of those in England.‡ “ The plan of Holland,” says Mr Sadler,

\* Appendix F, p. 575.

† Ibid. p. 576.

‡ See Kasthofer, *Voyages dans les Petits Cantons*.

“has *always* been, generous and unwearied attention to wretchedness and distress. Possessed of a narrow untractable territory, and an unpropitious climate, loaded with taxes, and with a declining trade, still she sets an example to every nation upon earth;” and the system there pursued, and under which, even in adverse circumstances, the sufferings of the poor are (as we learn from a report made by two of the Assistant Poor-Law Commissioners) so effectually relieved,—is still the same as *nearly two centuries ago*, extorted the admiration even of the profligate Charles II. “I am of opinion,” said he, when Holland was threatened with invasion, “that God will preserve Amsterdam from being destroyed, were it only for the great charity they have for their poor.\*

Of the history and present state of the Austrian institutions for the relief of indigence, we have satisfactory information in the last work published in regard to that country, that of Mr Turnbull. “As the power of the feudal lords became restricted, so did their protecting benevolence pass away. The pauperism thus created was farther and extensively increased by the reduction of the monasteries under Joseph II., between the years 1782 and 1786; and hence the government of Austria, like that of England at an earlier period under somewhat similar circumstances, found itself compelled to organize what may be termed a system of poor laws, whereof the sketch was traced by Joseph, and the full development completed by the late Emperor Francis. The first aim of Joseph was to restore entire efficiency to all *existing* institutions of benevolence: for which purpose he assumed to the crown the supervision and direction of every private and collegiate endowment. He next issued commissions to examine and report upon their respective funds and circumstances; and with this information before him, he suppressed those establishments which he considered superfluous or ineffective, pouring their revenues into a general mass, which, under the designation of the poor fund (*Armen Fond*), he created or improved in each of these provinces. The institutions which he retained,—hospitals, alms-houses, charitable societies, or whatsoever else they may be,—he did not divert from the objects of their foundation: neither did he allow the whole sources of the poor-fund itself to be applied to other purposes than those of social beneficence, but the administration of the fund, and the direction of the establishments, he subjected wholly to the control of the imperial authorities.”—Vol. i. p. 59 to 60.

“In every rural community or parish, and in every district of the larger towns (which for that purpose are divided into sec-

\* Ireland—Its Evils and their Remedies, p. 226.

tions according to the population), is established an *Armen Institut*, or institution for the poor, which is under the immediate direction of the minister of the parish, and of an officer termed the *armen-vater*, the father of the poor. Its funds are partly derived from the interest of any special endowments, which private benevolence may bestow, from donations received through the poor-box affixed at the door of every place of worship, from fines imposed for offences under the police and criminal jurisdictions, and from certain small municipal imposts in cities and towns, on articles of public sale; but its most stable and general source of income, is a collection made monthly from house to house, which, from the general tendency of the Austrian character to acquiesce in the recommendations of their clerical or civil superiors, has mainly the effect, without the odium of a compulsory assessment. The money and means collected, are received and distributed solely by the minister of the parish, and the *armen-vater*, with the aid of the Protestant pastors in administering to the necessities of their own communities. Relief is afforded to the stationary poor, and also to casual and migratory applicants, provided with proper passports and papers, according to a graduated scale of full, half, and quarter allowances, sometimes in money, sometimes in provisions; and annual statements are furnished, exhibiting every detail of receipt and expenditure, which, after being countersigned by an official accountant, find their way through the *Breisampt* and the *Landesstelle*, to the ultimate source of every Austrian administration, the Imperial Chancery at Vienna. This is what may be termed the ‘districtual out-door relief,’—the proper objects of which are aged, the infirm, and the victims of casual misfortune; but, for the suppression of vagrancy, and the punishment of idleness, depots of mendicity (*i. e.* workhouses) are formed in most or all of the cities and larger towns, combining the double purposes of police and charity, to which vagrants are transferred, and where they are compelled to labour. Alms-houses and infirmaries are very numerous: some supported by voluntary contributions and special endowments, others by the public funds of the province; and for the relief of persons of somewhat superior class, numerous societies are formed by individuals, who voluntarily contribute their means and their time in visiting and relieving private cases of distress, which shrink from the acceptance of public charity.”—Pp. 61, 62.

“ Similar reports are rendered from every hospital, and by the medical supervisors of every parish, through their respective superiors, to the *Landesstelle* and to the *Proto-Mediker*, and from the whole of these materials are digested annual statements for the Board of Charities at Vienna. The *Landesstelle*, who are charged with the administration of all the charitable funds,



transmit to the Imperial Chancery an annual budget of the income and expenditure, together with estimates for the future year; the *armen-fond* being applicable generally to all objects of beneficence,—to the erection and support of hospitals and infirmaries,—and, when occasion may so require, to the enlargement of the funds of the *armen-institut*, in the different districts and parishes. If, in any one year, its resources, together with those of the other charitable revenues, are more than adequate to meet the charge on them within the province, the surplus is invested in securities until it shall be demanded for future necessities. If, on the other hand, they be insufficient for those objects which the *Landestelle* recommend, and the Supreme Board of Charities approve, a grant is made from the general revenue; *for the Crown never forgets that its strength depends on its paternal character*, and endeavours to provide that, in some mode or other, misery, unaccompanied by crime, shall not be unrelieved.”—Vol. i. p. 66.

“On the actual condition of a population so large and so diversified, it is less easy to arrive at accurate knowledge, than on the machinery of the institutions by which they are governed; but all who have turned their attention to the subject, have admired the order and regularity, the contentedness of spirit, the absence of mendicity or visible destitution, the apparent sufficiency of worldly means, and the abundance of physical enjoyment, which seem generally to prevail in the German provinces of the empire.”—Pp. 66, 67.

There is here a deficiency of information as to the extent to which this public provision is carried; but a memorable instance of the practice of the Austrian Government is afforded by the city of Venice, containing 112,000 inhabitants, which lost its trade, and fell into great misery after the close of the last war; a commission of public charity was formed, the funds of which, as in the German States, are supplied, partly by bequests and endowments, partly by voluntary contributions, partly by taxes on the city and on the province, and all deficiencies which it requires are made up by the Government. By this commission about L.100,000 annually have lately been disbursed; and instead of this city being, as lately described by Mr Hallam, “crowded with half-starved wretches, like other parts of Italy, among whom charity is hopeless,” Sir W. Money, British Consul at Venice, writing in 1834, says, “there are not 20 beggars to be found in the whole city.” But in order to produce this result, that Government did not, like the British Government in Dublin, acting on the system which now finds favour in Scotland, confine its assistance to the *sick* poor; they admitted, as constituting the claim to relief, “extreme poverty among the lower classes without the means

of obtaining subsistence, or incapacity for labour whether from age or sickness," and allowed so much per head per day, as long as the parish priest certified the wants of the lower classes; and the extent of the destitution they relieved was nearly one-half the population of the town, from 47,000 to 50,000 in the year for ten years preceding 1834. The number relieved in that year was 42,700 at home, and 4600 in hospitals; the government contributing above L.15,000 (besides L.33,000 for the foundlings and insane of the Venetian provinces); and it is particularly worthy of notice, that, so far from this extensive public charity weakening domestic affection, Sir W. Money states, "that there is much family affection among all ranks of the Venetians; and in sickness, distress, and old age, among the poorer classes, they shew every disposition to assist and relieve each other."\*

I consider the case of Venice is peculiarly instructive, because we have there an opportunity of judging, how far the destitution which shews itself in the Italian and other towns of the south of Europe, where there is no efficient poor law, is found to be real, and to demand efficient aid, when subject to the same kind of scrutiny as is habitually exercised in Germany. It appears that when the German system, virtually giving a legal claim for relief, was applied there for the first time, the number to whom it was found necessary to extend this relief amounted to nearly one-half the population. I should like to be distinctly informed of any town or district, where poor laws (*said* to augment the evil they profess to cure) have been long in force; and where the amount of *destitution* amounts to any thing like this.

The contrast between the fallen city of Venice under the Austrian Government, and the similarly circumstanced city of Dublin under the British, is enough to shew, that whatever superiority our government may possess in many respects, there are others in which one great object of all governments, *ut cives feliciter vivant*, is more uniformly fulfilled.

It is true that in most of the countries now instanced, restraints are imposed on the poor, particularly as to marriage without visible means of supporting families, which may be thought by some to counteract a pernicious bounty on population, which would otherwise have resulted from these poor laws; but I think it appears clearly from what has been stated, that in England the general diffusion of the feeling of artificial wants, fostered by the legal protection of the poor, has been at least as effectual in that way; and it requires no great penetration to see, that no law restraining *marriage*, unless coinciding in the general feelings of the people, will ever materially restrain *population*.

\* Appendix F, p. 663.

It was very properly inquired in all these countries, by the British Government, whether this extensive and compulsory relief of the poor places those persons who are thus relieved in a more comfortable condition than the labouring men and their families, or makes the condition of a pauper preferable to that of a labourer? and the answer to this inquiry is almost uniformly and decidedly in the negative. Indeed, when it is remembered that in these countries (as now in England), an able-bodied pauper may be, and very generally is, *deprived of his liberty*, it is surely unnecessary to entertain any apprehensions on this point. The argument of Mr O'Connell, that poor laws cannot be applied to Ireland, because the condition of the labourers there is so bad, that that of the paupers cannot be made worse, implies a forgetfulness of the value of the great blessing of liberty, hardly to be expected in so zealous a patriot.

I beg it may be observed, however, that while one of the arguments against poor laws is, that they tend to lower the rate of wages, almost the only country in Europe, where the wages are so low, that it is practically found impossible to depress the pauper below the labourer in point of pecuniary profit, is Ireland, where no poor laws exist. There is another district, the French department of Brittany, from which the answer to this question is, that "the able-bodied self-supporting labourer in the towns is very little better off than the person subsisting on charity. The difference in food is in favour of the latter;" and again, that the "condition of the poorer families, daily labourers, and beggars, are so near akin, that the passage from one of these states to another is very frequent." And in this district, as in Ireland, "*no such thing is known as a legal claim for assistance from public or private charities.*"\* The same miserably depressed rate of wages exists, as we have seen, in the virtually non-assessed districts of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Again, there are some countries in Europe, in which the relief of the poor is not administered in the same systematic manner, and although carried generally or occasionally to a great extent, is not so generally effectual, either in the relief of suffering, or the prevention of mendicity, as in those hitherto mentioned.

The practice of Belgium does not differ materially from that in Germany. "The Belgian poor law is sufficiently founded on the system established throughout the French dominions by the Directory in 1796 and 1798. By this law, every commune is required to have at least one 'bureau de bienfaisance' for the relief of its poor. The funds arise from voluntary contributions and the receipts of public exhibitions, all deficiencies being made

up by levies raised in the same manner as other local expenses. Relief is given in poor-houses (hospices) or *à domicile* (out-door relief). Settlement is acquired by birth, or residence for a year as a rated inhabitant, or two years in service. Mendicity or vagrancy are subjected to heavy punishment in *depôts de mendicité*. These depôts, which are simply workhouses, are *bound to admit all applicants*. It is, therefore, futile to assert, that a legal right to relief is not established in Belgium, as in the other northern states of Europe. Every town in Belgium has its hospital for the sick, which is likewise open to every applicant."

The French Comité de Mendicité after the Revolution, acting on the belief that the legal and systematic relief granted in England was "*la plaie politique de l'Angleterre la plus dévorante*," "very properly and judiciously" (in Mr Malthus's opinion), "rejected the establishment of such a system." The consequence was, however, that the French towns were inundated by mendicants, and it was found necessary to adopt a public system of relief, which, being partial, is overburdened; heavier in some places, and less effectual in all, than the English Poor Rate.

"The French establishments for the relief of the poor consists of *hospices* for the infirm, hospitals for the sick, *depôts de mendicité* for vagrants and beggars (constituting the in-door relief), and *bureaux de bienfaisance* for the *secours à domicile*, or out-door relief. The funds are partly provided by voluntary contributions and collections in the churches, and the deficiency is supplied from the *octroi*, or municipal funds of the *commune*. These institutions are, however, in full operation only in the town districts. In the country, the administration of relief is imperfectly organized, and great distress is occasionally felt, which would be intolerable, were it not that, owing to the extreme dispersion and subdivision of landed property which has followed the sale of the church and emigré estates at the time of the Revolution, and the law of equal succession, there are few peasants in France who are not proprietors of land.

"According to M. Chateaubieux, the population of the towns in which a system of relief is thoroughly organized amounts to 3,500,000 persons, and the cost of the relief annually distributed to L.1,800,000 Sterling. This would bring the expenditure per head to nearly as much as in England, before the Amendment Act,—to very considerably more than the present expenditure. In Paris, the amount is 1,200,000 francs, above L.500,000 a-year. The number permanently supported in the hospices or workhouses of Paris is about 12,000, nearly 2 per cent. of the population; 70,000, or nearly 10 per cent. of it pass through the hospitals every year, and the fund is burdened also with 20,000 foundlings. The proportion of the population in the receipt of

relief in these French towns is very considerably greater than in England. In Havre, with a population of 28,000, not less 5000 receive occasional relief. In Caen, there are 6000 or 7000 paupers to a population of 40,000.”\*

On the other hand, several parts of France, and various other countries in Europe, present examples of extreme destitution and extensive mendicity and immorality, resembling, though I believe nowhere equalling, what we see in Ireland; resembling also but too closely, what we see in some parts of Scotland, and, as with us, *coinciding with a deficient or inadequate legal provision for the poor.*

“In the rural districts of France, the system of relief is, as has been said, very partial and irregular. In Brittany (as already stated), there appears to be none. Nantes and the other large towns have their regular establishments, but the rural communes neglect their poor, and are, consequently, infested with mendicants. Brittany is the poorest part of France; and the system of cultivation in very small farms, together with the number of beggars, produces a state of society somewhat resembling that of Ireland.

“Daily labourers and beggars may, in this country, be classed under the same head. The labourers generally work during two or three months in the year, and beg during the remainder.

“Mendicity is not considered disgraceful in Brittany. Farmers allow their children to beg along the roads. All attend religious festivals *to beg*. ‘Several attempts to suppress mendicity have been unsuccessful. District asylums were established. No sooner were they filled, than the vacancies in the beggar-stands were immediately replenished by fresh subjects from the country.’

“The principal cause of their misery is *inebriety*; *its frequency among the lower orders keeps them in poverty*. The ‘cabaret’ (wine and brandy shop) absorbs a great portion of their earnings. This vice is not confined to men; the women partake of it.

“We have quoted this passage to shew the similarity of the state of things brought about by the absence of a public provision for the relief and employment of the poor in two countries, otherwise so unlike, as Brittany and Ireland.”†

“In proof that universal mendicancy is the alternative of having no poor laws (in a country in an advanced state of civilization), ‘I may safely refer,’ says Mr Sadler, ‘to any one who has travelled through those countries in the south of Europe, where there is *no regularly organized system of public relief for*

\* Magendie, Appendix F, p. 42.

† Quarterly Review, *loc. cit.* and Appendix F, p. 72.

the poor. No expense, however great, no establishments, however magnificent, seem to compensate for the want of this. I shall only quote one or two authors, and leave the reader to contrast the situation of such countries, in regard to poverty and wretchedness, with those where there is a regular system of national relief, as Switzerland, Sweden, Holland, and England. 'Let the travellers,' says one of them (Milford's Observations during a Tour through France), 'start from the rock of Lisbon, and proceed through every part of Spain, Italy, and France, and the wretchedness and beggary which prevail in every town and village through these Christian Catholic countries, can only be appreciated by those who have witnessed such scenes. In Spain and Portugal, human misery and mendicity are on a more extended scale than in France and Italy. These scenes of misery every day presenting themselves have been the subject of my reflections during many a solitary ramble through Europe.' "Naples," says Kotzebue, "is crowded with beggars, whose number defies all calculation. What I have seen is as much as need be known of human misery."\*

The United States have been spoken of as a country free from the curse of pauperism; but their exemption from it is only partial and local. Their system for the relief of the poor was derived from that of England. "It is in fact the 43d of Elizabeth, modified in the different provinces by the exigencies of their local circumstances. The changes they have made consist principally in endeavouring to avoid giving relief out of the workhouse, and in making the workhouse an abode in which none but the destitute will remain. Compared with our own, the system is in general rigid. We need scarcely remark, that this severity is proper in a country whose boundless margin of unappropriated land, of the first quality, offers a sure resource for every able-bodied person who is willing to live by his industry—while the same degree of severity would be unjustifiable in an over-peopled country possessing no such resource."†

The administration of legal relief appears to be various in the different parts of America, and from the cause now mentioned, hardly admits of a comparison with this country. In the most advanced parts of the country, however, its necessity has been felt as with us, and it has been carried to a great length. In Philadelphia the poor rate amounted in 1803 to 75,000 dollars, or L.15,000, in a population of 67,000:—in 1820, to 140,000, or L.28,000 in a population of 113,000. In 1825 it had fallen to 120,000, but in 1832 had risen again to 139,000. In New York in 1811, it was 154,000 dollars, above L.30,000, and

\* Sadler's Ireland, &c. p. 220.

† Quarterly Review *ut supra*.

there were many voluntary charities besides. In 1833, the number of paupers in the State of New York was nearly 36,000, and the cost of the paupers in a portion only (for which the returns are given) of Massachusetts, was 164,000 dollars.\* The Commissioners in Pennsylvania, who drew up the existing act, regulating the poor, say, "We cannot agree with those who would confine the aid of the overseers of the poor to the infirm and helpless. A well managed house of employment will seldom afford much attraction to the idle and profligate, and may be a refuge to the honest poor, and an example to all." And the answers to the queries sent by the British Government from that state, contain the following statement. "If there be in the poor laws a tendency to increase or produce the evils they are intended to mitigate, *as has frequently been suggested by persons abroad*, there are counteracting circumstances in the rural districts in this country, which prevent such a tendency being developed. The same remarks may be made, with some qualifications, however, on the operation of the poor laws in the cities and principal towns. That there is a considerable number of persons in Philadelphia and its neighbourhood, who rely on the poor laws for relief, when disabled or out of employment, is probably true; and it *may* be true, that the tendency of the system is to produce improvidence and idleness in *some* of these persons; but such are in general the rewards of industry in almost every occupation, that the prospect of deriving any advantage from the poor laws does not, it is believed, affect any considerable portion of the population, even in the cities. The tables shew a considerable increase in the funds raised for the support of the poor within thirty years—but the population has more than doubled within that time; and other causes besides the provisions for relief, may have contributed to enlarge the number of paupers."† It is true, that we have here, as in many other cases, an opposite *opinion* from her Majesty's Consul at New York, that "the receipt, on the expectation of relief, has a highly injurious effect on the industry and frugality of labourers;" but of the soundness of this gentleman's judgment, most readers will, I believe, be much inclined to doubt, when they find that he further maintains that "no region can be in a healthy state where such infectious establishments as *Dispensaries* exist."‡

In most countries which have any pretension to good government, this necessity has been felt in a very early stage in society. "Even Siberia has her poor law." I am assured, on unquestionable authority, that, in most Mahometan countries, although the precept of the Koran, which orders one-tenth of

\* Appendix F, pp. 156 and 137.

† Ibid, p. 137.

‡ Ibid. p. 157.

every man's goods to be given to the poor, is not strictly enforced, yet the right founded on it is universally admitted ; and the relief habitually given to destitution, in consequence of it, is such as almost uniformly and permanently to preserve those countries from that appearance of abject poverty which disgraces several parts of Christendom.

We may draw, I think, two conclusions with perfect confidence, from this hasty review of the provisions touching pauperism and mendicity in those parts of the world which are in the most advanced state of civilization, and which exactly coincide with those drawn from a comparison of England and Ireland : *First*, that the idea of the poor, in any such country, supporting themselves, without much and constant assistance from the higher ranks, is perfectly visionary and Utopian ; and *secondly*, that the countries which have been most permanently successful in maintaining the destitute and dependent portion of the people in comfort, are those in which indigence, independently of disease, has been long admitted as having a legal claim to relief, distributed according to a uniform system, and by local authorities, and to such an extent as to preserve all the inhabitants from the want of the first necessities of life. The observation of Dr Johnson, that " a fixed and decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization," is fully justified ; and the reader can judge how far any nation of which we have an account, has obtained a fixed and decent provision, without the aid of the law.

It appears, that in those countries where an adequate legal provision for the poor exists, the proportion of this dependent part of the population varies according to the prosperity of the people, and the degree of complexity of the state of society, but that it has not gone beyond 10 per cent. in any one of which we have an accurate account, for example, not either in England or Holland where such provision has existed for centuries, under circumstances very favourable to its extension. But in those countries where no such provision exists, the dependent part of the population, usually taking the form of mendicity, extends to *a much greater proportion* of the whole ; all over Ireland it is fully 25 per cent., in many parts of France it is above 20 per cent., in Brittany it comprehends *all* the labourers and many of the farmers ; in Venice it was above 45 per cent., before the Austrian rule began ; and I have no doubt that in other town of the South of Europe, if they were subjected to an equally rigid scrutiny, it would be found to be equally great.

But we need not go beyond Scotland for examples to illustrate this matter. In Berwickshire, a legal provision has existed for



about a century, and is now nearly on the same footing as in many counties of England. Much apprehension has been expressed at the increase of pauperism in this county, and tables constructed to shew that the proportion of paupers in the population has been tripled in sixty years.\* But let us consider the extent of the evil, and how far it furnishes a fair argument against the system. The paupers in Berwickshire now amount to 1 in 26, rather less than 4 per cent. of the population. It may be judged from the facts above stated, that this proportion is not excessive; I believe it, however, to be a fair proportion for an agricultural county, and I fully concur in the propriety of resorting to workhouses in order to prevent its being carried to excess. Again, in the town of Ayr, much alarm has been expressed because the number of regular paupers has increased to the "enormous burden" of 3.6 per cent. of the population (279 in 7600), and the funds for their relief to 3s. 2d. a-head on the population, of which three-fourths are raised by assessment.† But in these calculations we have no information as to the *condition* of the people during this increasing pauperism, *i. e.* as to the degree in which the system has been successful in relieving suffering and destitution, or has excited an increase of misery. We may judge of this in some degree, however, from observing the change of the population. During the sixty years when the pauperism was thus advancing in Berwickshire, there has been abundance of time for the legal provision, if it really have the pernicious effect on population which has been ascribed to it, to cause not only such a multiplication of paupers, but such a redundant population, and such consequent destitution and suffering, as would have fully established the injurious effect of the system. But, during the last forty years, the population in Berwickshire appears to have been *almost quite stationary*.‡ And in Ayr the increase of the population is "very slender.§"

On the other hand, in the Highlands and Islands, where poor rates are merely nominal, we have seen what an increase there has been during the same time, *both in the numbers and in the misery of the people*. This we do not ascribe, of course, merely to the Voluntary System, but we inquire how that system has met it. We have seen that, on some occasions, *nearly the whole population have become dependent on charitable aid*; and that, in one of these districts, where the permanent paupers on the roll are 60 (and

\* See Turnbull's Report on the Pauperism of Berwickshire.

† Report on the State of the Poor in Ayr, 1839.

‡ In 1794, the population was 29,708. In 1834, the paupers were 1018, and their proportion to the population is stated to be as 1 to 26.—Turnbull, p. 13 and 14.

§ Report, p. 8.

have L.3 a-year divided among them), the clergyman, if he had funds, would immediately place 200 on the roll; *i. e.* the numbers and the destitution of the people have so increased, that the paupers might be *tripled in one day* (and the allowances to them multiplied tenfold), and only justice be done to the poor.

We may conclude, then, that it is a part of the dispensations of Providence, and a natural consequence of the Law of Population, that the higher ranks of society in every country, in an advanced stage of civilization,—in return for the numerous advantages which they derive from having the services of so many of the lower ranks at their disposal,—must be content to bear the burden of the maintenance of many, for whose services they have no need, or who are incapable of rendering them any. That the assistance given to these lowest, but not least important members of society, may be effectual in maintaining them in tolerable comfort, and thereby preventing much vice and misery, and a *morbid increase of destitution*, it is essential that it should be liberal, but discriminating; uniform, regular, and permanent, as the state of destitution which demands it. That it may fulfil these conditions for the benefit of the poor, and at the same time press justly and equally on the rich, it is essential that at least a great part of it should be levied and distributed *by the law*. Nor does the law which performs this office deviate in the smallest degree from its proper province. The relief of human suffering is a sacred duty, written from the beginning on the hearts of men, enforced by the positive precepts of the Gospel, and which no nation can violate or neglect with impunity. The business of the legislator is to equalize the burden which it imposes, and regulate the benefits it confers, not to check the impulse from which it springs.

I shall now proceed, lastly, to state more explicitly, what are the improvements in the system of management of the poor in Scotland, which seem to me to be required, in order to put their condition, especially in the large towns, on a footing with that of the lower orders in the best regulated countries in Europe.

1. I am not a judge whether, for this purpose, any alteration of the law is requisite, but I can easily see that no alteration of the law would have the desired effect, without the removal of the apprehension which is so strongly impressed on the minds of almost all who are entrusted with the administration of the laws now existing in this country, *viz.* that the relief of poverty leads ultimately to its continual recurrence and increase, and to other injurious effects; and it is chiefly to dissipate that apprehension that I have written the foregoing pages.

Next to the removal of this great obstacle to any improvement in the condition of the poor, is the importance of a power being lodged somewhere (probably in Sheriffs and Magistrates, certainly not in any body appointed by the rate-payers themselves), where it can be exercised without expense to the parties concerned,—of *enforcing* the law as to an adequate relief of all destitute persons, for whose benefit the existing statutes are designed. This power has been limited in England by the Poor-Law Amendment Act, probably too much; but still exists, as already observed, at least in regard to strangers, and *all persons unable to work*. One great defect in the practical administration of the law of Scotland seems to be, the want of any speedy and effectual means of compelling a husband, who is in employment, to make provision for his wife and family, or parents for children whom they choose to cast off. This seems to be frequently done, through the intervention of parochial authorities, in England, and, as far as I can see, is hardly ever thought of here.\*

That poor rates *may be* lavished with indiscriminate profusion, and produce more or less of the evil consequences which have been ascribed to them, it would be absurd to deny, but this has very seldom happened, so far as I can learn, to a hurtful extent, in any country; and I think no one who knows the Scottish character can entertain the smallest apprehension of their being too

\* This deficiency of legal remedy for this very common evil is strongly stated in the Report from Dundee. In a Report by a Committee of the Parish Meeting, presented 7th February 1837, it is said that "it is deserving of especial consideration, whether there should not be a communication with other towns, and an application to the Lord Advocate for legislative aid, in the establishment of a more summary and efficient form of procedure for obtaining relief in cases of children abandoned by their parents."

"Your Committee conceive that the evil requires a more prompt and efficacious mode of dealing with it, than the Scotch law now affords; and that the other parishes in Scotland should be invited to unite in applying for a legislative enactment to provide a suitable and efficient remedy for an increasing evil, and one which, if not checked, will not only entail a heavy pecuniary burden upon the community, but will go far to extinguish the kindest feelings of human nature."

In illustration of the deficiency of any legal protection to destitution brought on in this way, I may mention, that, within a few weeks of last autumn two instances occurred of girls, aged 12 and 14, brought into the Infirmary half-naked and ill of fever, who had been turned out of doors by their parents, and lived actually on the streets, sleeping generally on the boards of the protection room at the Police Office for many days. In one of these cases, the Police officers, as I am informed, humanely interfered, and brought the mother and alleged father of the girl before a magistrate, but the law was found insufficient for her protection, and the child was returned *to the street*, from whence she was some days after brought to the Infirmary. She has since been taken into service and is doing well. In a third case, occurring within the same time, a child only eight years old, was reduced to the same predicament, and, as I am assured, hardly lay down in a house during thirty days, while her mother, an Irish widow with a child on the breast, was in Bridewell for begging. Where there is no legal protection for such deserted or neglected children, can we wonder that we have many juvenile thieves?

liberally or incautiously expended here. I have therefore no difficulty in expressing my opinion, founded on the facts which have been stated, that assessments should be imposed uniformly throughout the country,—that no parish, nor any body of men (such as the members of the College of Justice in Edinburgh) should consider that they are doing any service to the community,—but, on the contrary, that none should think they are doing their duty to the rest of the nation, who, on any pretence, avoid assessment for the poor.

The following extract from a communication, with which I have been favoured by Mr Wigham (well known for his attention to many of the charities in Edinburgh), forcibly illustrates the effect of the system pursued towards the poor in the non-assessed parishes of Scotland, and confirms what I have stated as to one great cause of the heavy burden which falls on the poor-funds in Edinburgh. “Many poor are driven from the 517 parishes, in which nothing worth the name of provision is made for them, to other parts of the country, which afford them a better chance of procuring bread by begging or other means. The friends of a lame woman in a Highland parish applied to the minister to know what amount of relief could be given? The answer was, ‘7s. 6d. per annum is the utmost.’ The poor woman came to Edinburgh in search of needle-work. If she does not fall a victim to typhus fever, she will most probably, at the end of three years, become a charge on the city or on St Cuthbert’s parish.” “At Helensburgh, where I have now resided seven weeks, I have seen very few beggars. It is in the parish of Roe. At the three toll-bars, where the principal roads communicate with this burgh, there are notices put up by the Magistrates that begging is prohibited. The inhabitants are warned not to encourage them, and such householders as shall harbour or lodge them are threatened with prosecution. In the parish of Roe there is no assessment for the poor. It is thus clear, that the system of giving little or nothing to their own legitimate paupers, and rigidly keeping out those from other parishes, drives both off to the large towns.”

I have often heard an opinion expressed, that any inquiry, or change, which may be thought necessary as to the Poor Laws in Scotland, ought to be confined to the great towns; but for this opinion, as it seems to me, there is no ground whatever. The directors of public charities in the great towns allege, in conformity with the statement of Mr Wigham, that many of the most distressing cases that come before them are from the country or the smaller towns, and are forced into the large towns by the inadequacy of the relief at home. Thus I have stated, on the authority of the Treasurer of the House of Refuge, that about

one-third of the persons relieved there are “ bona fide objects of parochial relief in other parts of the country.” In Glasgow, one-third of the Scotchmen, with families, who applied for public relief in 1837, were from the country (how recently is not stated). Indeed, not more than one-fifth of the population of Glasgow are believed to be natives, and three-fifths from other parts of Scotland. In Paisley, it was ascertained in 1821 that not more than one-half the families were from Renfrewshire, and nearly two-fifths were from other parts of Scotland, many of whom, no doubt, would soon become a burden on the parish.\* In the Report on the Pauperism of Ayr, it is complained, that “ other parishes in a manner half starve their poor, in order to prevent their increase and save expenses;†” the natural effect of which must be, an influx into the large towns, where there is more wealth, and more irregular and precarious employment, as well as charitable institutions. Very numerous instances of the same kind have come under my own observation, both among applicants to the public institutions, and dependents on private and precarious charity in Edinburgh.‡ Such allegations are of themselves, as I conceive, fit subjects for inquiry, with the view of equalizing the burden of the destitution of the country over its different districts.

Again, whatever may be the comforts allowed to the aged, disabled, or destitute poor in some districts of the country, we have seen from the Report on the Highlands and Islands, that the present administration of the law affords no *security* to the poor against any species of misery or even actual starvation, against which they certainly are secured in other countries.

Farther, if it shall appear on inquiry, as I shall afterwards state that we may reasonably expect, that an alteration of the law of settlement will be really just and expedient, to relieve the large towns of the burden which a truly humane provision for all the poor imposed on them by the present law of settlement would imply, the country districts will be immediately involved in the results of that inquiry.

I need hardly, after what has been repeatedly stated above, dwell on the fallacy which seems to me to render quite nugatory the common objection, that assessments, once imposed any where, are found necessarily and apparently indefinitely to increase. In every case, where this objection is stated, the question should be

\* Report by G. C. Lewis, Esq. on the Irish Poor in Great Britain, p. 61.

† Report, &c. p. 11.

‡ Some doubt having been expressed on this point, I made a little inquiry, and in a few hours found 14 families, about 40 persons, who believe themselves to have a claim on distant parishes, but prefer living in Edinburgh (although in extreme destitution) and burdening its voluntary charities; and in a short time will be entitled to its parochial assistance.

put, how is the *population* affected? If the assessments increase, without any unusual or morbid increase of population, that must depend on one of two causes; either on an increase of the comforts allowed to the poor, which is no national evil, or else, on some negligence in the admission of cases requiring relief, against which I have not the smallest doubt that Scottish prudence and ingenuity will speedily supply a remedy.

But if it be feared that an increase of assessments will result from an increase of population, excited by the legal provision, and running a-head of the means of comfortable subsistence, this is the argument of Malthus, to which the facts already stated, and the contrast of England and Ireland, or of Berwickshire and the Highlands, or of any of the European countries which possess, as distinguished from them which do not possess a legal provision, seem to me to furnish a decisive answer.

2. I think the assessment which is imposed should be every where very considerably more than it now is, and that the allowances to widows and orphans, to aged, disabled, and impotent persons, should be much raised.\* If we were to act in the same way as the unions formed in England under the present administration of the Poor Laws, we should expend in Scotland nearly L.800,000 instead of L.140,000. Of course it would not be advisable to make so great a change suddenly, but this sum may be regarded as a limit to which, judging from the experience of England, I have not the smallest doubt that we might gradually approach, with great benefit, not only immediately but permanently to the poor, and no real injury to any class of the community. It should be remembered that L.500,000 per annum is less than the amount of the funds raised, chiefly by indirect taxation, by the city of Paris for the support of their poor, in a population hardly more than one-third of that of Scotland; and that it is less than the sum expended annually in Holland on the poor of a population not equalling that of Scotland, and where the value of money is higher. I cannot think that there is any thing extravagant in the wish that the same sum were expended in Scotland, on the poor of a population greater than that of Holland, and three times as great as that of Paris; and I very much doubt whether there is any country in Europe, where the management of the poor, and their condition, are really worthy of imitation, in which the cost of their maintenance, as proportioned to the population, is smaller than this.

\* As one precaution against misapplication of public charity, it would be right to have it granted in smaller sums, and more frequently than at present, *e.g.* in weekly instalments, instead of at intervals of six weeks, as in Edinburgh at present.

3. I think that the workhouse system ought undoubtedly to be introduced into every considerable town in Scotland, and even that unions of parishes, where there are no large towns, should be formed as in England, to support workhouses, for the permanent reception at least of aged, disabled, or incurable persons, and of orphans, who have no relations with whom they can be comfortably settled; for the reception of women and children left or deserted by their husbands and fathers; and also for the reception and confinement of all destitute persons, entitled to legal relief, who are judged to be improper objects for out-door relief on account of intemperance or immorality.\*

To shew that the opinion of the necessity of workhouses as a part of the system for the proper management of the poor in all parts of the country, has suggested itself to others as well as myself, I shall take the liberty of quoting communications with which I have been favoured from two gentlemen who have had fully as much practical experience in the management of the charities now existing in Edinburgh, as any individuals who can be mentioned.

Mr Wigham, lately one of the managers of the West Church Charity-Workhouse, says, "an experience of seven years confirms me in the belief, that the poor cannot be well managed without workhouses. There must be a workhouse by which to test them. With it, there is no danger that any class of paupers will require large out-pensions."

Captain Thomson, the treasurer of the House of Refuge, says, "The proclamation of the Scots Privy Council, 3d March 1698, would be a benefit. It is for providing workhouses; and Scotland will never do right, nor put down vagrancy, till workhouses are provided, and made a test of destitution. Were that the case, I am persuaded much good would follow." The same opinion is stated by Mr Turnbull in his Report on Pauperism in Berwickshire.

It seems to me equally clear, that one of the legitimate objects of the application of the poor's funds should be, in this country as in England, the building of fever hospitals in connection with the workhouses, and the payment of the expences of fever patients, either there or in the general hospitals of the country, as well as of their families, during their confinement.†

\* One of the most important results obtained by the experience of the House of Refuge in Edinburgh is, that there are many persons whose conduct, when at liberty, has been so profligate as to reduce them to beggary, who are orderly, industrious, and useful, when merely kept under a strict discipline and restraint.

† I understand, from my friend Dr Cowan, that a distinct legal opinion was obtained in Glasgow, that the public authorities are entitled, under the existing law, to "apply the current assessment, or impose an additional as-

4. Although it has not yet been the practice in Scotland to give any parochial relief to able-bodied poor, yet I am equally confident that, in justice to the poor themselves, with a view to the maintenance of a desirable standard of comfort in them, with a view to the tranquillity, and more especially, with a view to the health of the community, such relief ought to be regularly given to those of the poor who are proved to be destitute from want of employment; and that this should be given, as it now is in England, unless in very peculiar circumstances, in the workhouses only.

It will be observed that the system of excluding the able-bodied from the benefits of legal charity has not been acted on in any of the countries in which the condition of the poor appears to be the most generally comfortable; neither in any part of Germany, nor in Switzerland, nor Holland, nor Denmark, nor Sweden, nor even in America.

Some persons, whose opinion I highly respect, have expressed to me serious apprehensions as to the security against the abuse of workhouse relief to able-bodied people. The true and simple security, I believe, lies merely in this,—that in admitting such persons to a workhouse, you deprive them of liberty; you make them slaves in a land of freedom. The experience of England on this subject is thus briefly stated by Mr Nicholls. “The governing principle of the system is this, that the support which is afforded at the public charge in the workhouse shall be, on the whole, *less desirable* than that which is obtained by dependent exertion. To carry out this principle, it might at first seem necessary, that the inmates of a workhouse should be worse clothed, lodged, and fed, than the independent labourers of the district. In fact, however, the inmates of our English workhouses are as well clothed, and generally better lodged and better fed, than the agricultural labourers and their families; yet the irksomeness of the labour, discipline, and confinement, and the privation of certain enjoyments which the independent labourer possesses, produce such disinclination to enter the work-

house, for the support and cure of such persons as are disabled from earning their subsistence by contagious diseases; and for such separation of such persons when suffering from the disease, or when in a state of convalescence, as may be necessary to prevent the farther spread of infection.”

It appears from the Report of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary for 1839, that fever is again on the increase in Glasgow, the number of fever patients admitted there in the last quarter of 1839 having been 625, and the mortality among them 1 in 6. These patients have “been chiefly sent in by Magistrates, the Police, and the Kirk-sessions,” and the obvious inequality and injustice of the voluntary system of providing for them has called forth a strong expression of opinion, that “the charge of their treatment in hospital ought to be defrayed from the Poor’s Rate of their respective parishes.”—See Glasgow Herald, April 10. 1840.



house, that experience warrants the *fullest assurance*, that nothing short of destitution and absolute necessity will induce the able-bodied labourers to take refuge therein; and that if driven there by their necessities, they will quit it again as speedily as possible. This has been *invariably the result* in England, and hence the conviction of the perfect sufficiency of the workhouse test. If the party is actually and unavoidably destitute, the workhouse affords relief to his necessities; if sustenance is in any way attainable by his own efforts, workhouse relief does not lessen the stimulus to exertion in search of it.\* An instance given by Mr Revans illustrates this point more graphically. "I was particularly struck with the diet of one workhouse in Nottinghamshire. I believe that few persons whose incomes do not exceed L.500 a-year, fare better than the inmates of that workhouse. Feather-beds only are used in the house, the sexes are not separated, and there are no means of setting the people to work. I asked the master whether able-bodied persons often applied for admission? He said, very rarely. I asked him how he accounted for this? Oh sir, said he, *I keep the key of the door*, and I very seldom allow the able-bodied people to go out, which they don't like; so if they can possibly live out, they won't come in. He told us that this house belonged to fifteen parishes, that it would only hold eighty people, and that he had rarely known it to be full."† Of course, I do not hold up this workhouse as a model for imitation; but I am thoroughly convinced, that I do not pay too high a compliment to the spirit of Scotchmen in believing, that they will not be found more willing to give the "key of the door" of their abode to a stranger, than the men of Nottingham are.

It appears that there is a decision of the Court of Session (case of Pollok against Darling, 17th January 1804) which found, that able-bodied persons, who were unable to subsist themselves from scarcity and high price of provisions, or total want of employment, might be relieved by an extraordinary assessment; but that judgment has not since been followed as a precedent. That it would be expedient to follow it, however, the experience of the other countries I have mentioned seems to me to leave no doubt.

It may naturally be expected, that if great evils are to be apprehended from the *want* of any provision for the unemployed poor, these must be chiefly felt in Glasgow, where the employment of the people is liable to so great vicissitudes. Accordingly, that there has been there a very great and rapid increase not only of poverty and misery, but of intemperance and improvidence, appears from facts already stated. "The younger gene-

\* First Report, p. 23, 24.

† Evils of the State of Ireland.

ration of weavers," says Mr Symons, "those on whom this evil has chiefly fallen, are far less educated, and far more prone to vice, than the elder. *Poverty is a main instrument in the debasement of mankind.* It has dragged the handloom weavers of Scotland from the highest to among the lowest ranks in the civilization of their class. The younger class are generally in the habit of spending their money as fast as they get it, and often before. They *seldom now accumulate anything worth naming before marriage.* Embezzlement of weft is the chief vice of the weavers; the demoralization caused by this system is widely spread, and pernicious to a degree which is not easy to exaggerate. The education of the children is so deficient, that the next generation will grow up in comparative ignorance."\* "The prevalence of intemperance in this city," according to the Report of a Committee lately appointed to investigate the causes of the increase of assessment, "seems likely to undermine the whole fabric of society. It is rapidly extending among those in early years of both sexes. Health is destroyed, industry neglected; *idleness and improvidence* cause every domestic claim to be disregarded. Aged parents are abandoned in their helplessness. Families are left to endure the miseries of nakedness and hunger. In the wretched parts of the closes and wynds (described at p. 7), the dense masses of human degradation are still becoming more closely packed."†

It is evident from these statements, that while the higher ranks in Glasgow have been advancing in wealth and luxury, a large proportion of the lower ranks have been, at least as rapidly, receding towards barbarism. I beg it may be observed, that this has taken place under a system of legal relief for the poor, purposely kept on as low a scale as possible. The "smallness of the allowances," regarded as the superior excellence of the Scotch system, has been strictly maintained; the whole annual amount of funds raised for the relief of a population so crowded and unhealthy, and afflicted very recently with such epidemics, being only at the rate of 1s. 7d. on each individual; this has been administered, according to the approved Scotch system, "simply to aid individual exertion and voluntary Christian benevolence;" and has been confined to the disabled or impotent poor, able-bodied men or women being excluded from all participation in it. The number admitted as paupers in a population, of which nearly one-eighth is in the state above described, is 2.6 per cent. of the whole.

Under these circumstances, and under this management, the

\* Arts and Artizans, &c. p. 151.

† Report of Committee on the increase of Assessment, &c. p. 5.

physical condition of a large portion of the poor has become as bad as is compatible with human existence; their mortality probably greater than in any part of Britain; epidemic fever has made ravages among them unknown in other parts of Britain; and the *improvidence* and *intemperance* of the great body of the poor has become such as to “threaten to involve them in one universal sink of pauperism, misery, and crime.”† It is plain that this system has worked as ill as possible; and that under it the population is restrained only by the positive checks of vice and misery, the poorest marrying, as we have seen, the earliest, and the preventive check of moral restraint being almost unknown.

But I need hardly say, that, according to the principles which I have here stated, and which, as appears to me, are fairly deduced from the experience of many other nations, *the system has worked exactly as might have been expected*; and as I believe it always will, when acted on in a large town, where the frame of society is complex, and the usual occupations of the poor unhealthy, and liable to vicissitude. At each stagnation of trade, many persons are thrown out of employment, for whom there is no provision, and who rapidly sink into the state of indigence and degradation formerly described;—every year, and especially on the occurrence of epidemics, many widows and orphans, and disabled people, are similarly cast down, and receive no such allowance as can enable them to retrieve themselves. I ask whether it is not true, in Glasgow, as I have stated it to be in Edinburgh, that, in these circumstances, they all become reckless and improvident; and that these examples, so far from teaching prudence to the families that are a step above them as to comforts, infect them with the same habits? “From their poverty and *improvidence*, such numbers are crowded into one apartment, and so huddled together, that there is no possibility of individualizing families, much less persons, in the attempt at inspection; so that instead of providing for real necessity, the relief so intended may only minister to the supply of habits of profligacy.”\* I ask, what can private charity do for such a state of matters? And I ask farther, if the relief of the poor is to be conducted on the same principles in future, what prospect is there that this state of matters will improve? How is this misery to be relieved, this intemperance to be cured, or the natural results on the prosperity, even of the higher ranks, to be arrested? When we compare the condition of these people, on the one hand, with that of the English poor, or of the German, or Dutch, or Danish poor, above described, among whom destitution is admitted to have a claim to legal relief,—or compare it, on the other, with the state of the

\* Report of same Committee, p. 5.

† Ibid. p. 8.

poor in Ireland, in Brittany, in Spain, or Italy, where no such legal claim is enforced,—it seems to me quite obvious, that, in adhering to the system now in operation, the citizens of Glasgow (if they really wish for the good of their fellow-creatures) are rejecting, not the theories of enthusiasts, but the *lessons of experience*.

Trusting to experience, I would say, that the proper remedies here are, first, to erect workhouses, into which able-bodied men and women, out of employment, and as many as possible of the most profligate, even of the widows and disabled poor, should be received. Judging by the examples of London or Paris, we should say that accommodation for at least 4000 people in these workhouses would be required. At the same time, the unemployed or disabled Irish, and other strangers, should be returned to their homes, in which workhouses should equally (and in Ireland soon will) be provided. In this way a considerable part of the pressure would be removed. Then the pensions to the disabled poor, and widows and orphans, should be at least doubled, always with the provision, that those whose conduct is found to be bad, shall be relieved in the workhouses only. In this way, that infallible mark of a disordered state of society, the union and amalgamation of families in the same rooms, will be gradually obviated; and when this separation and purification of society in its lowest ranks shall have been so far effected, experience entitles us to expect that artificial wants will be felt, that the standard of comfort will gradually rise, and that religious and moral instruction will have a fair opportunity of taking effect on the character and conduct of the people. These remedies will require time, and will cost money; but their safety and efficacy, as I think many facts stated in this paper shew, are amply attested by experience; and when we consider that their proposed application is to a state of “wholesale human misery and degradation,”—in which vice is almost universal, and by which the duration of human life, in more than one-tenth of the population of Scotland, is lessened by fully one-third from the average of this country,—and by one-fourth from the average of London,\* it is surely not going too far to say, not only that the trial ought to be made, but that we cannot hope for the blessing of Heaven on a nation which hesitates about making it. If the richer citizens of Glasgow say that the evils of the English Poor Laws will thus be brought upon them, the answer is, that these evils (now that the principal error of those laws has been corrected) have been *proved* to be trifles, in comparison of those which their fellow-citizens are now enduring,

\* In 1837, the mortality in Glasgow was 1 in 24, in London about 1 in 32.—(See 1st Report of the Registrar-general in England, p. 18.)

and which, by the sure laws of Providence, will sooner or later react upon them.

I cannot help adverting here for a moment to the system of combinations among skilled workmen to raise the amount of wages, which aggravated so greatly the distress at Glasgow in 1837-38. Much surprise has been expressed at the tenacity with which educated and intelligent men cling to this unjust and irrational system of combination; but it is obvious that there must be some cause, which enlists the feelings of the labouring manufacturing population so strongly in its favour; and I think we can have little difficulty in understanding this, if we recollect the peculiarities of their situation. They live by an employment which they can only follow in certain places, and under the control of masters with whom they have often only a temporary connection, whose interest it is to lower their wages as much as possible, and whose numbers are so small, that they can easily combine for that purpose. The demand for their labour they know to be precarious, and subject to sudden variations, and there is no fund, excepting that which this labour supplies, on which they can rely for the subsistence of themselves and their families. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that, as the Irish peasants cling with desperate tenacity to the land, which is their only resource against starvation, so these manufacturers should array themselves against their masters, and resolve, at all hazards, to maintain the price of their labour; that, under the excitement of habitual agitation, and of the power of numbers, artfully presented to their imaginations, they should go to absurd extremities; and that to them, as to the poor Irish, all manner of crimes and atrocities should gradually seem justified, as the only means by which they can secure to themselves such a share in the profits of their work as may protect them against ruin,—which they know to be imminent, and which, in many instances, they feel that they have done nothing to deserve, and everything in their power to avert.

It is very true, that, by prudence and frugality when their wages are high, they may often do much to protect themselves against the effects of sudden reverses of trade; but this is not always in their power. If it were, experience shews, that, in all circumstances and ranks of life many men will be imprudent; and the occupations and mode of life of manufacturers in large towns are peculiarly unfavourable to the growth of those virtues. In their case, as well as in that of the Irish peasants, it seems to me to be obviously the policy of a wise and beneficent government, by providing another fund, on which they, as well as others, may rely, in time of real necessity, for subsistence, to give them

that security against ruin and starvation, which they vainly seek to obtain for themselves by violence and outrage ; and the facts which I have stated as to the effects of legal provision for the poor in all countries give us good reason to hope, that the contentment and mental tranquillity which that security naturally produces, will favour the influence of religious and moral feelings, and the growth of artificial wants in their minds,—much more than the fear of destitution, which it is so much the fashion at present to hold out as the grand preservative against improvidence among the poor ; but the supposed efficacy of which, so far as my observation goes, and, as I think, all experience teaches, is perfectly delusive.\*

We are told by Mr M'Gregor, that “ the operation of the Danish Poor Law has been *most beneficial* at times, when great numbers of working people were suddenly thrown out of employ by the circumstances of the times ;” and the Fourth Report of the English Commissioners records a striking example of the efficacy of the present system of relief to the able-bodied in England, in the town of Nottingham ; where there was such a stagnation of trade in 1837, that, after a subscription of L.4000 to relieve the unemployed workmen had been expended, the numbers of able-bodied men and women, either employed or relieved in the workhouse by the Guardians of the Union gradually rose, until it reached 498 in December 1837, while, at the same time, 690 other inmates were in the workhouse ; *i. e.* more than 2 per cent. of the population ; above 300 more were fed twice daily in a shed ; and the whole out-door relief reached L.160 in the week, in a population of 50,000. The opponents of poor laws would say, that all this was “ breaking down the independence of the poor,” and that they would never return to habits of industry. I maintain, on the other hand, that it was saving them from misery, starvation, and fever, in the mean time, and from degradation, idleness, and improvidence, in future. Observe the result. Gradually the pressure subsided ; the work-people again found employment ; by the middle of June, the employment of able-bodied people, at the expense of the Union, was discontinued ; only 71 able-bodied and 381 others remained in the workhouse, and the out-door relief had fallen to L.78 in the week. And when we compare the subsequent Christmas quarter with the Christmas quarter of the previous year, as to the

\* Even in England the opinion seems to be gaining ground, that the best remedy for combinations among workmen will be found to be “ a provision rendering the master-manufacturers more fully subject than they at present are, to the payment of poor-rates in proportion to their creation of paupers.”

number of persons relieved and the expense of their relief, we find the numbers to have been thus reduced:—

Christmas Quarter.	Number relieved.	Expense of Relief.
1837	5264	L.4037
1838	2414	2390
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Decrease,	2850	L.1647

At this last date, the quarterly expenditure had fallen greatly below what it was in spring 1837, when the embarrassment was beginning; and, after all, the expenditure on the poor in the year ending March 1838 amounted to no more than L.18,556, in a population of 50,608; which, although an increase of above L.7000 on the previous year, did not amount to 7s. 4d. a-head on the population, no very unusual proportion in England. I have not obtained any returns as to the number of fever cases at Nottingham in 1837–38, but have reason to believe, that if there had been any formidable increase in it, I should have been informed of it.

Of the effect which regular and effectual assistance to the able-bodied poor, when out of employment (by taking them or their families into workhouses),—or to the partially disabled poor,—would have on the diffusion of fever, any one may be satisfied, who attends to the cases of fever presenting themselves day after day during the epidemics; beginning in the families of persons out of work or unable to maintain themselves in comfort, and extending through them, and from them to their neighbours.\* In fact, I cannot doubt that it is by the relief promptly and steadily given in such cases, that the comparative exemption of the English great towns (especially of those where there are few of the wandering Irish) is chiefly purchased.†

\* For example, an Irish widow with four young children, who have been four or five years in Edinburgh, was refused relief from the Charity-Workhouse; and the managers, no doubt, thought they did a service to the city, by keeping this burden from the inhabitants. But mark the consequence. She and her children have lived for some time in extreme destitution, in a close cellar, in a small but crowded close. There one of the children took fever, the others soon sickened, the disease spread to the neighbours, fifteen cases occurred within a very limited space in a few weeks; some of which became a heavy burden on the Infirmary: one young woman who supported her aged mother died, and the mother becomes a burden on the city. How far further the evil may extend is yet doubtful. This is the last case of the kind of which I have traced the history, but such cases are of constant occurrence. I have witnessed hundreds of them, beginning, or chiefly extending, in similarly distressed families. If this family had been taken into the workhouse, or supported in comfort out of it, I firmly believe this little epidemic would never have occurred.

† The remarkable exemption of the town of Birmingham from fever was already noticed. There, the population being certainly under 150,000, the poor rate is L.40,000 a-year. An able-bodied man or woman out of work and

Of the effects which similar relief would have on the numbers, and on the morals of the poor in the worst parts of Edinburgh and Glasgow, we may judge from a short quotation from Mr Symons' work already mentioned. "A dozen sometimes in a day of young girls, chiefly from the country, said Captain Miller of the Glasgow Police, come to me to beg for honest employment; but what can I do? The factories are overstocked; the benevolent institutions would not contain one-hundredth of them; they have no character; and if they had, there is no employment for them."\* In England, such poor creatures may be, and continually are, sent back to their parishes, and there confined in workhouses until they can find employment. There will be many lost members of society under any human institutions; but can any one doubt, that, by this benevolent law, many must be saved and placed in honest employment, who would otherwise have "run the brief career of vice, drunkenness, disease, and death?"† or can any one suppose, that, in the complex society of large towns, any other means than giving the unemployed poor a *right* to claim such relief, can be effectual for this purpose?

While I confidently refer to the example of England, and of many other countries, in proof that the claim of relief from able-bodied people, really unable to procure employment, may be safely admitted, provided only, that it is in general administered in workhouses, I beg to repeat, that I by no means acquiesce in the expectation, that the Poor-Law Amendment Act in England, or any modification which may be adopted of the law in Scotland, ought ever to render the workhouse the sole means of relief. "Out-door relief," says Mr Nicholls, "is at present only tolerated in England as an evil unavoidable for a time, and which is to be gotten rid of as speedily as possible." Even if limited "to the aged, sick, and infirm," he adds, "how is abuse to be prevented, and how is the precise amount to be defined of that age, or sickness, or infirmity, which shall entitle an individual to be relieved out of the workhouse? I believe it to be impossible so to define

destitute is taken into the workhouse; "destitute children are taken as far as possible into the asylum for infant poor, where they are maintained and educated;" and a widow or a disabled man receives from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. a-week, with 1s. for each child under eight years of age not so provided for. Again, in the town of Sunderland, where the population is nearly 50,000, and where only 53 cases of fever were taken into the hospital in the three years 1836-37-38, *i. e.* 17 in a year,—the sum expended on the poor is L.11,200 in the year, and the allowances to widows, orphans, aged and disabled persons, nearly as in other parts of England.

\* Op. cit. p. 118.

† The experience of the House of Refuge in Edinburgh, which has acted in this respect partially and irregularly, from its limited means, but exactly as a well regulated workhouse would do, leaves no room for doubt on this point.



the conditions as to prevent partiality and jobbing, and the occurrence of gross abuses.”—(Second Report, p. 95.)

I need hardly say, that, in order that this opinion be adopted, much of the statements and reasonings contained in this paper must be necessarily set aside; but I am happy to find, that it has not yet been acted on in any of the English unions (in which the out-door relief still greatly exceeds the expense of the work-houses). I am much inclined to believe, that the retrenchment and limitations of the relief granted in England have been carried nearly as far as is advisable; and that the chief improvements now to be looked for in the English system must be in the great manufacturing towns, where the employment of the poor is liable to so great fluctuations; and in them I venture, with great diffidence, to suggest, that there are two great desiderata which must be supplied before the system can work, as I trust it is still destined to do, for the benefit of all. 1. That the burden of the Poor Rates should be more equitably adjusted among the different classes of the inhabitants of those towns; and 2. That a reserved fund, similar to the *Armen-fond* at Vienna, should be provided and placed at the disposal of a central authority, for the occasional assistance of those districts in which the burden of the poor rates may occasionally become excessive, in consequence of misfortunes known to be incident to manufacturing industry, and beyond the power either of masters or workmen.

I am quite persuaded, from daily observation of the good effect even of the scanty assistance given in the way of out-door relief in Edinburgh, that this kind of assistance to widows with families, and to aged and disabled persons of good character, is essential to the proper management of the poor, and to the right constitution of the lower orders of society. A widow, of good character, not overworked (as they too often are in Scotland), receiving such an allowance from the parish as may enable her, with the aid of her own industry, to maintain her family on the same level, as to comforts, on which they had formerly moved, and having access to religious and moral instruction for them, will, I believe, very generally bring them up better than any workhouse will. And with all possible respect for the opinion of Mr Nicholls, I would say, that the experience of Scotland shews, that there is no such practical difficulty in defining the proper objects of out-door relief as he supposes; and that if the workhouse were always in reserve for the reception of doubtful cases, a vigilant administration of the poor law, by men convinced of its general utility, would sufficiently guard against any considerable abuses.

5. I venture to propose, as necessary to prevent a uniform and increased rate of assessment from pressing too heavily on the

great towns, or even on Scotland in general, that the present law of settlement should be altered. At present no Scotchman can obtain a settlement in Ireland, and a little management on the part of his employers can prevent his obtaining a settlement, even after many years of useful labour, in England, but every Englishman, and what is of infinitely more practical importance, every Irishman, can obtain a settlement in Scotland, who can maintain himself in any one parish for three years. It is impossible to doubt that while this inequality subsists, any decided improvement in the condition of the poor in Scotland will lead to an influx from other parts of the British dominions.

But the law of settlement by three years' residence acts unequally and unjustly in Scotland itself. In consequence of it, the families of many men who have come from the country districts into the unhealthy large towns, and who have been disabled by disease, or died there after a few years' residence (for example, very numerous families who have been rendered fatherless by fever), are fixed in these towns, and even at a very low rate of allowance, become a considerable burden on the inhabitants; while the still working members of such families are obliged to enter into competition with very numerous rivals in a situation where their occupations are completely overstocked. Thus the Ancient Royalty of Edinburgh, with a population of 55,000, is burdened with 691 widows as out-pensioners, of whom 354 have families, while the West Church Parish, with 70,000 inhabitants, being generally healthier and less crowded with very poor inhabitants, has only 464 widows on its out-door list. And although the allowances to widows and disabled persons in Edinburgh are not greater than in many other parts of Scotland, we have seen that the inhabitants of the Ancient Royalty (one-fifth of the property, it must be remembered, escaping taxation in consequence of the privileges of the College of Justice) are taxed for their poor to the extent of 3s. 3d. a-head, a sum not much less than the amount of the poor-rate in various parts of England.

The law of settlement by three years' residence was tried in Denmark at the time of the revision of the Poor Laws, but, in consequence of the inequality of its operation, was abandoned, and a residence of fourteen years substituted; and it seems to me to be very clear, that a family which has only settled in a town for five or six years, and of which the working member has died, ought not to be considered as established there, and should in fairness fall back on its previous domicile.

I am aware of the objections stated by Mr Nicholls to any law of settlement being established in Ireland, and admit the force of some of these objections; but they apply chiefly to a country in which, as yet, no *right* of relief is granted to the people. Where

such right exists, it seems on the whole decidedly better that every individual should have a *home*, where he can claim it; and that, as in the law of Scotland at present, settlement should be by birth, or by residence for a term of years; but, in order that the burden of poverty should be equalized as much as possible, I think the term of years requisite for this purpose should be extended from three to seven, or even to ten (which is the rule actually followed now, although not enjoined by the law, in Liverpool and Manchester, as to the Irish poor),—with this provision, however, that the allowance granted by one parish should be (as is occasionally done at present) regularly paid in another, if the pauper can be profitably employed there; and that, by completing his term of years in his adopted residence, he should be allowed to transfer his right of relief to it, equally as if he had resided in it the full term before applying for relief. In this way, the burden of pauperism would be much equalized, without any serious interference with the circulation of labour.

If these alterations were made on the law of settlement—if the allowance to paupers over Scotland generally were raised and equalised, and if the privileges of the College of Justice were abolished, I am convinced that the comforts of the poor in Edinburgh might be very much raised, by a moderate addition to the assessment now in force on the inhabitants who are rate-payers, and with a considerable diminution of the burden now pressing on the voluntary charitable institutions and on many individuals. I am equally convinced, that an extension of the workhouse system is all that is necessary to prevent abuse of the increased allowances; and that we should receive a temporal reward for this increased care of the poor, in an improvement of the health of the city, and a diminished liability to fever.

All the objects now stated are completely within the power of the people of this country, at an expense considerably less than that which the people of England now bear for the maintenance of their poor.\* The best practical proof that could possibly have been desired, that this burden has not been excessive in the case of the English people, is to be found in the great unwillingness which has been shewn by *great numbers of the rate-payers in England* to reduce it to its present amount, lest that reduction should trench on the comforts of the poor. Having this example

\* It has been objected to these proposals, that the Scotch people are much less wealthy than the English, and less able to bear such taxation as is here required. I answer, that although poorer than the English, the Scotch people are not poorer than the Welsh; and that if the whole public provision now made for the poor in Scotland (1s. 4d. a-head on the population) were tripled, it would only amount to two-thirds of what the Welsh people now pay for their poor (viz. 6s. a-head) without any indication of discontent or injury.

before our eyes, I can see no obstacle to the adoption of these measures, of certain relief to much suffering, and prevention of more, excepting only, that many will be unwilling to abandon the theoretical idea, which all experience, on so large a scale as to be free from individual fallacies, shews to be untenable, that misery and starvation will teach prudence to the poor. We must learn to regard pauperism, in so far as it is an evil at all, as a necessary evil in every country in an advanced state of civilization; the only alternative, as all experience shews, being extreme suffering, with extensive mendicity; both of which I think we ought to regard, after what we see of the example of other nations, as heinous national sins, sure to be followed by national punishments, and among others by this, that they are truly incompatible both with the maintenance of health, and with religious or moral improvement, in the lowest class of the people, who congregate in the great towns. We must learn to believe, that there is neither wisdom nor virtue in denying to our suffering fellow-creatures that assistance which is given to the poor in other countries; and thereby virtually condemning them to a mode of life, in which the average duration of their existence is shortened, simply by the want of sufficient nourishment and of sufficient clothing, by one-fourth from that which is the lot of the inhabitants even of the larger towns of the southern division of the empire. And those who have leisure and inclination to devote themselves to the service of the poor, may be assured that here, as in England, they cannot employ themselves better, for this purpose, than in superintending and regulating the administration of the great national establishments for "Charity by Law."

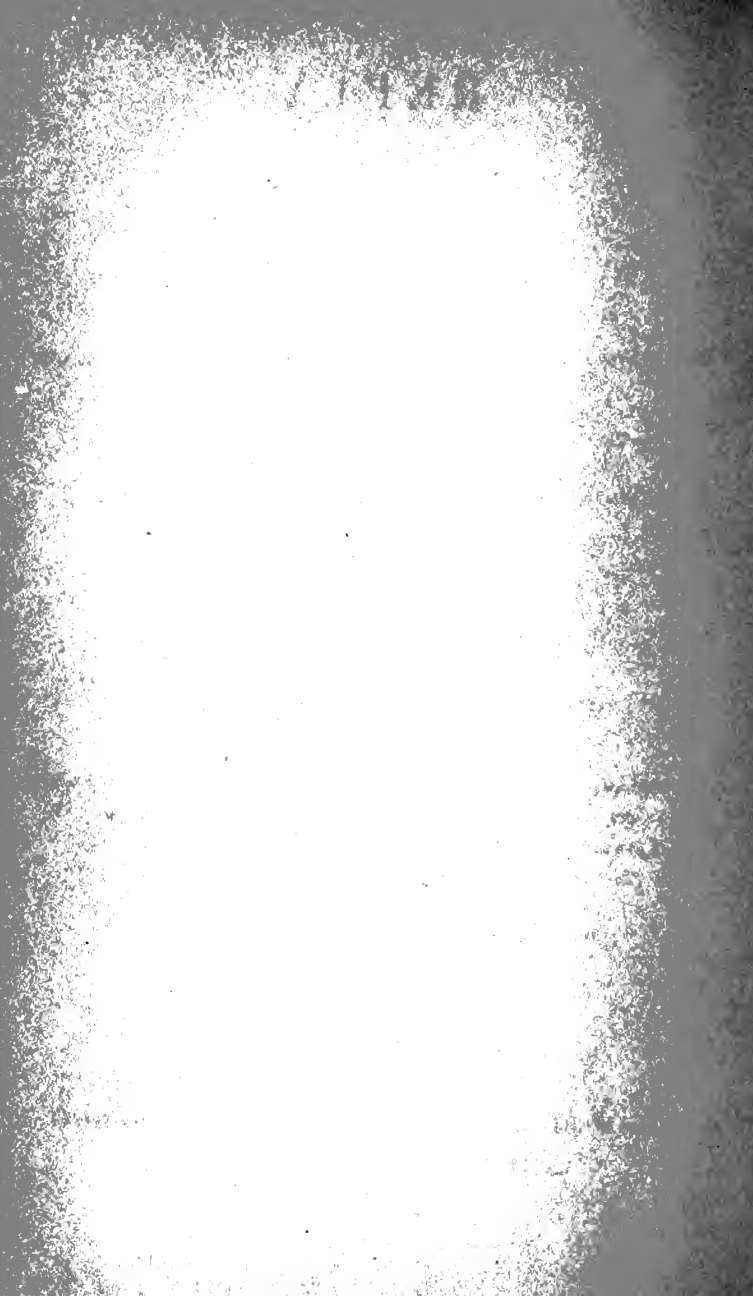
It must be admitted, however, that there is one difficulty which up to this time would have in a great measure frustrated any plan for the improvement of the condition of the poor in Scotland, viz. the continual importation of the poor Irish, who have hitherto had no provision for them at home, and acquiring settlement by three years' residence here, have been always ready to take advantage of every benefit that would be conferred on the lower orders in Scotland. Now that some provision is made for their support in Ireland, we may reasonably expect that this burden on the charities of Scotland will not increase as it has hitherto done; and, on this account, there never has been a time at which measures for the permanent improvement of the condition of the poor in Scotland, and of the health of our great towns, could have been brought forward with so fair a prospect of success. If advantage be taken of this opportunity, in the manner which I have ventured to recommend, it appears to me, from what has been stated, that we are fully authorized, by the experience of other

countries, to expect, that much suffering will be permanently relieved, and much disease, with all its evil consequences, prevented; that the habits of the lower class of the people will be improved; the unwholesome stimulus to population, now existing in our great towns, be checked; and the greatest of all obstacles to their religious and moral improvement be removed. At all events, unless I am strangely deceived in regard to facts which seem to me indisputable, and inferences which seem inevitable,—we shall then, and not till then, be following the course which both reason and experience point out, as most effectual for the attainment of these objects.

FINIS.



REPLY, &c.





# REPLY

TO THE

PAMPHLET ENTITLED

“ PROPOSED ALTERATION OF THE SCOTTISH POOR LAW  
CONSIDERED AND COMMENTED ON,

BY DAVID MONYPENNY, ESQ. OF PITMILLY.”

BY

WILLIAM PULTENEY ALISON,  
M.D., F.R.S.E.

FELLOW AND LATE PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, EDINBURGH;  
HONORARY FELLOW OF THE KING AND QUEEN'S COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS IN  
IRELAND; PROFESSOR OF THE INSTITUTES OF MEDICINE IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH; AND ONE OF THE PHYSICIANS  
IN ORDINARY TO HER MAJESTY FOR SCOTLAND.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH;  
AND T. CADELL, LONDON.

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MDCCCXL.



## REPLY, &c.

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WHEN I undertook the difficult task of endeavouring to point out to the people of Scotland, that duties, which the great majority of them believed to be satisfactorily performed, were very frequently neglected, and that laws, which they held to be "more honoured in the breach than the observance," ought to be strictly and uniformly enforced, I should have betrayed great ignorance of human nature, if I had expected such doctrines to be received, or any practical measures founded on them to be adopted, without vigorous opposition ; and I have many acknowledgments to make, for the expressions of personal courtesy with which this opposition has been accompanied. It seems to me, however, sufficiently clear, that the only truly conclusive argument against a liberal and uniform (but carefully guarded) legal provision for the poor, in this or any other country, is that which is founded on the alleged influence of such a provision on the progress of population. If it can be shewn that there is no such tendency, as Malthus and others have supposed, in such an institution, to weaken the principle of moral restraint, and thereby act as a bounty on population,—still more if it can be shewn that its natural tendency, under tolerably prudent management, is to strengthen that principle, and check excessive population,—all other arguments against it seem to me so feeble, and so easily set aside by appeals to experience,—and its advantages, as the simplest, surest, most equitable, and only effectual means of fulfilling an acknowledged moral obligation, and obeying a positive precept of religion, are so great and obvious,—that its ultimate adoption by any intelligent and well informed community, sincerely anxious for the performance of those duties, appears nearly inevitable.

I have, therefore, carefully examined, not only the pamphlet to which I now propose to reply, but the different speeches which have been made, and the resolutions which have been passed, in condemnation of the proposals, as to the management of the poor

in Scotland, which I have ventured to bring forward ; and, finding no effectual defence attempted of that fundamental position of the opponents of the legal provision, I hope I shall not be accused of want of respect for the members of those meetings, or disregard for their opinions, when I express my conviction, that this opposition will gradually subside. If the minds of the Scottish people are first disabused on that point of political doctrine, and if then, the allowances which they grant to the unemployed, disabled, or aged poor, and to widows and orphans, and the condition and sufferings of those unfortunate members of society, are fairly brought into comparison with the state of things in those countries where an ample legal provision exists,—and if the dangers and disorders incident to society from their present condition are duly considered,—I am persuaded that, sooner or later, the administrators of public charity will cease to pride themselves, either on the smallness of the allowances which they grant to the poor, or on the amount of human suffering, the relief of which they can contrive to evade—that the comforts allowed to the disabled or impotent poor will be raised—that the unemployed and destitute poor will be held to be entitled to the benefits of legal charity ;—that (as a part, and *only as a part*, of the relief given) workhouses will be erected,—and that the authority of law will be employed, when required, both to raise the necessary funds, and to enforce the requisite relief. Until this is done uniformly and regularly throughout the country, the evils which I have described cannot be adequately met. And when it is done, all the essential peculiarities by which the Poor Laws, now in force in England, or in Holland or Germany, differ from those in Scotland, will have been introduced.

Whether this may be done by a formal extension of the English law, or by an improved administration of the Scotch, is a question on which I have formerly stated, that I do not profess myself competent to judge. On one important branch of the subject, the Law of Settlement, in which a most material difference exists between the practice in England, Scotland, and Ireland, it seems to me very doubtful whether the right principle has been yet adopted in any one of these countries. All that I wish to see is, such provision made for the comfort of the aged and disabled poor, the destitute unemployed poor, and the widows and orphans of the poor in Scotland (and with such security against misapplication), as I know to be made for them, with great relief to human suffering, great assistance to religious and moral instruction of the lowest class of the people, and, so far as I can learn, no real injury to any members of the community, in other parts of Europe. I trust to nothing but *experience*, either for the proof that this can be done, or for the information how it may

be done ; and I think experience teaches that it cannot be effectually and permanently done, otherwise than by a very considerable extension of the legal provision for the poor. I have been warned by several friends, that the prejudice existing in Scotland (of which I said a few words formerly) against English legislation, especially on this subject, would have made it more politic to omit all mention of the English Poor Laws, but I still think it was better to encounter this prejudice openly, and honestly to avow (what would very soon have been discovered), that no such extension of the provision granted under the Scotch law to the poor can take place, without a close approximation to the mode in which the legal relief to the poor is now administered in England. All the more important objections usually stated to that system will be found, as I believe, on examination, either to be founded in error, or to be directed against parts of it which no longer exist. Admitting neither system to be perfect, I invite the closest comparison of the two ; only let it be a comparison involving the effects of both, not only on the pockets of the rich, but on the lives and comforts of the poor. It seems to me to be quite necessary to the due regulation of the affairs of the poor in Scotland, that our objections to the English system, in so far as they are founded on facts, should be carefully reconsidered ; and, in so far as they are founded on prejudice, should be altogether dispelled ; and that we should feel at liberty to avail ourselves of the experience of our neighbours in a department of civil polity in which, after deliberately considering all that I have ever heard urged on the other side, I do not hesitate to repeat, and am prepared to justify, my conviction, that (notwithstanding various abuses, and one important error on the side of humanity, *now corrected*) their practice has been greatly better than ours.

The absurdity of arguing from the *abuses* of the old English Poor Law against the principle of ample legal provision for the poor, was long ago distinctly pointed out by Dr Stevenson M'Gill, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, whose opinions were stated, and highly approved by the late Rev. Dr Andrew Thomson, in the *Christian Instructor* in December 1820 ; and I am happy, on this as on other points, to quote the authority of these two learned and able divines in favour of the views which I have advocated.

“ What connection has the mode of appointing overseers, or placing persons on the poor's list, indiscriminate and profuse allowances, minute and complex laws of settlement, ill-managed poor's houses, or finding employment for men in health ;—what connection have these practices with the principle of providing by assessment, in a wise and sober manner, for the truly indigent, and impotent, and helpless ? These are all points connected with a particular system, and have no connection with the general subject. Every one of these particulars, if they are found to be in-

expedient, may be swept completely away, yet the assessment for the poor remain untouched, and be carried into the fullest effect, with every provision necessary for accomplishing its benevolent object. From confounding matters so distinct, much false reasoning, and many strange assertions, have been maintained, and many very causeless prejudices have been excited. The incidental evils of a particular system, and what are supposed to be the necessary consequences of the general principle of maintaining the poor by assessment, are all mixed up together in one mass, and thus the case is supposed to be made out, and one sweeping conclusion is drawn.”—(M‘Gill’s Discourses and Essays, &c. &c., p. 386.)

I beg to assure the learned author of the pamphlet which I am now to consider, that I am very far from including him among those whom I have represented as regarding this question as one merely of pounds, shillings, and pence. I am perfectly aware of the respect due to opinions (mistaken as I confidently assert them to be), which I have repeatedly said, that men of the highest ability and the purest benevolence have expressed; and no one can be more sensible, that I should disgrace a cause which I feel to be a just and sacred one, if I were to descend to personal imputations on any of my opponents.

But it is not inconsistent with these feelings of respect to express my belief, that the opinions of this author, as well as of many others on this subject, have been taken from books, meditations, and calculations of expense, much more than from observation of the habits, character, and sufferings of the poor, and particularly of that great body of the poor, who, in rich and civilized countries, congregate in the large towns. If a careful observation and study of these things had been considered, as I think it ought, a necessary preliminary to speculations in regard to them, I do not think we should have been embarrassed by opinions as to the relief of poverty, so much at variance with religious precept and moral feeling, as those which have lately prevailed, and I apprehend that writings on the subject would have been much more instructive.

Thus we have been told, that all the information which can possibly be desired in regard to the pauperism of Scotland is contained in the Report lately made to the General Assembly, and published by their orders. Now, that report contains, indeed, very minute details as to the funds applied in Scotland to the relief of the poor, the modes in which they are raised and applied, the numbers receiving aid from them, and the principles which regulate their distribution: but it does not contain one syllable of information as to the *condition*,—as to the habits, sufferings, or

privations either of those who are relieved, or of that large class of equally indigent persons in Scotland who are excluded from participating in them;—nothing, therefore, which enables us to compare these with the state of those things in other countries, and judge how far the Scotch system is effectual for the purposes, for which all regulations affecting the poor in any country are designed.

Again, in the work before us, as in many others lately published in this country, pauperism is spoken of as *a disease*, fostered by assessments, and reaching sometimes such a degree of *malignity*, that without the application of a strong and *almost desperate remedy* (viz. the workhouse), it cannot be conquered; and it is said that the chief use of a workhouse is, to “correct the evils which spring from such a system, but which do not, and cannot exist without it.”\* So also, any increase of pauperism in Scotland is very generally represented as a great evil, and when it amounts to 3 or 4 per cent. of the population, it is called “an intolerable burden.”

I cannot think that such metaphorical and exaggerated representations (as they seem to me) of this department of human nature would ever have been made by men who had accustomed themselves to observe, in this and other countries, the numbers and condition of the poor, *i. e.* of that class of society who are necessarily, although from various causes, *dependent* on the rest; who “never cease out of the land” of any nation; and who are committed to the care of the more fortunate members of every Christian nation, by the express command of Heaven. The authors of such statements seem to expect that the poor are to “cease out of the land;” they consider the term Pauperism as synonymous with Poverty and Misery; they think that wherever Pauperism is kept down, the duty of the rich to the poor is fulfilled, and never advert to the great and increasing mass of destitution and suffering in Scotland, which has never, up to this hour, been admitted to the benefits of the legal provision, and therefore is not pauperism, and for the relief of which there is no practical security. In many cases, as I believe in every case where pauperism is now increasing in Scotland, the real state of the fact is merely this, that the charity of the higher orders is taking the direction by which it can be most surely and effectually applied to the relief of sufferings which had long existed, and not previously been adequately met.† We need not go beyond the limits

\* Proposed Alteration, &c. p. 54.

† To the objection, “that, by assessments, the number and expense of the poor are increased,” Dr McGill long ago answered, “that the causes of this increase of pauperism, wherever it takes place, existed before assessments were employed;” to which Dr Thomson adds, “When there is a great addition to the expense of maintaining the poor, it ought to be ascertained whether they have now too much, or had formerly too little.”

of our own country to know, that where there are no paupers, these sufferings may be so intense and general as to constitute a heinous national sin; and again, that where there are many paupers, they may be so effectually relieved, as to draw down the blessings of strangers on the land. And although we admit that *one* essential part of the use of workhouses is, to correct the abuses to which pauperism may otherwise lead; yet, when we read the description which I hope is now very generally applicable to a workhouse in England, "a large comfortable well built house, superintended by a steady master, visited daily by an appointed surgeon, in which orphan children, old people (who have no relatives), and those who are unable to find employment and wages, are at once received, fed, warmed, clothed, and lodged, until they can provide for themselves elsewhere; in which school-mistresses are provided for the children, prayers regularly performed, the ministers of their own faith at all times allowed to visit the inmates; and in which the principal residents of the neighbourhood meet weekly to superintend the establishment, and to hear any complaints;" it does appear to require some little process of reasoning, if not a little effort of imagination, to convince us that this is a "desperate remedy" for an evil of our own creation. There has been no pauperism up to this day in Ireland, but are there no evils there, to be relieved by this desperate remedy?

Again, I cannot think that the notion, certainly predominant in the minds of many authors, that unrelieved destitution and consequent degradation of the poor are a natural and sufficient check on improvident habits and early marriages, could ever have been entertained by men capable of philosophical reflection, and accustomed to the practical observation of humble life. The author who has most fearlessly followed out this doctrine to its practical consequences, is Lord Kames, who maintained (in effect) that "the aged and helpless who have wasted their better days ought to be left to such tender-hearted persons as are more eminent for pity than principle, and if a few, from neglect or oversight, should die of want, he thought it would be of no importance, *or rather it would be an advantage*; for the example of such, left to perish, would tend more to reformation than the most pathetic discourse from the pulpit." (See Review of M'Gill's Discourses, &c., Christian Instructor, Dec. 1820, p. 729.) But I think any one who has been accustomed to observe the manners and habits of the poor when reduced to real destitution, must have known, that for one person who really perishes from want, thousands *learn the fatal secret*, on how small an amount of sustenance, and with how little of comfort or enjoyment, human life can be sustained; and having learnt it, overspread the land (as in Ireland or the Highlands) with a suffering population, in compari-



son of which, even a host of paupers, controlled by the law, are a blessing.

Before considering the *objections* which have been stated by Mr Monypenny to the proposals I have made, it is necessary to lay some stress on the *admissions* which he has made, and to remind the reader of the arguments which he has declined answering.

I. And first, as to the main argument of the influence of a Poor-Law on the population, which has always seemed to me the key of the whole position of the opponents of a liberal provision for the poor, the defence which is attempted seems so feeble, and so completely paralyzed by the candid statement of the admission made by Malthus himself, that we may regard that argument, so far as this pamphlet goes, as virtually abandoned. "It is fair to admit that, reviewing the evidence on this subject, Mr Malthus, in his latest edition, appears to have considered the objection as *not distinctly made out*, to a precise and definite extent." (P. 90.)

In answer to the statement, however, which I have endeavoured to support by reference to many acknowledged facts, that "recklessness and degradation lead to improvident marriages and increase of population," and that such a uniform protection against destitution as may foster artificial wants, and maintain habits of comfort among the poor, are found to strengthen the preventive check of moral restraint, we are reminded that Dr Chalmers "is inclined to think that recklessness and degradation are more the causes than the consequences of poverty, and that the restoration of the prudential check is more directly arrived at by the operation of a moral influence than by any economical arrangement." (P. 87.) In this opinion the author of this pamphlet acquiesces, observing, "It is true, that those who are in a state of destitution will not readily listen to such considerations, but still they are *the only considerations* that can reach the case, and cure the evil." (P. 90.)

On this I must take the liberty of observing, that when an author has collected a number of *facts*, and reasoned upon them, in refutation of any particular opinion, he cannot be answered by merely reiterating the *opinion* which he has opposed. Every one who has studied this subject of late years, is aware that Dr Chalmers' opinion (as briefly and distinctly stated in the Quarterly Review, vol. xlviii. p. 67) is, that "Since nothing can make food keep pace with population, all our efforts should be turned to make population keep pace with food; and that *the only specific* for this is, 'prudential restraint on marriage, self-imposed by every individual, and inculcated by Christian education.'"

In opposition, not to this speculative opinion, with which I al-

most entirely agree, but to the practical inference from it, that *no other aid* to the prudential check than religious education should be attempted, I have adduced many facts and arguments (p. 37 to 58 of my 2d edition) to shew that, in the case of young people brought up (often, no doubt, in consequence of the recklessness of their parents, often in consequence of unavoidable misfortunes, but always independently of any fault of their own) in a state of extreme destitution and degradation, no kind of education has been found generally effectual in restraining the natural tendency of human passions. In this respect, the most destitute and degraded of the poor of Edinburgh, the poorest weavers of Glasgow, the cottars of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, or the same people when transported to the inhospitable shores of Cape Breton, the half-naked and half-employed labourers of Ireland, are all found to be equally reckless and improvident as the *Chiffoniers* of Paris or the *Lazzaroni* of Naples. But, on the other hand, I have stated, that in all countries, and in all ranks of society, it is found, when young people are brought up in tolerable comfort, and accustomed to certain artificial wants, that they are unwilling to degrade themselves by descending to a lower and more miserable mode of life, and *much more generally* refrain from early and imprudent marriages; that on such persons education, religious and moral, takes practical effect; and that thus it happens, as I verily believe it was designed by Heaven, that, with a view to this political effect, *human charity becomes the best preliminary, and the most efficient auxiliary to religious instruction*. I stated that this observation is easily made on a small scale in any country, and that we have only to extend it to whole nations to enable us to explain the fact, which, at all events, seems to me to be undeniable, and of which I gave various examples on a large scale, that in those countries where a full legal provision for the poor exists, necessarily preventing the descent of many young persons to the degradation of abject poverty, the pressure of the population on the means of subsistence is practically found to be *much less*, than where there is no such provision.

Now, the facts on which I have relied in making these statements may be inaccurate, or the inference I have deduced from them may be incorrect; but it is no answer to them, merely to repeat the assertion against which they were originally opposed; and I have therefore only to say, as to that assertion, that it will be time enough to make the *opinion* either of Dr Chalmers, or of any other man, a ground for withholding relief from destitution, when examples, on a large scale, shall be given, of people living in the state of abject poverty, and insufficient employment, which I have described, who have been so subjected to the "moral influence" of education, as to have had their increase distinctly and

beneficially restrained, and their condition ultimately and permanently improved, without any temporal assistance having been given to relieve their sufferings, and to elevate them and their offspring above that degraded mode of life.

Next, we are reminded of Lord Brougham's *opinion*,—likewise familiar to all who have studied the subject of late years,—that the Poor-Laws of England “afford the greatest stimulus to population which the art of man could devise,—the most wilful and direct encouragement that could possibly have been given to improvident marriages, that the history of human errors can produce no parallel to the mistake into which those learned and ingenious persons have fallen” who have thought otherwise; and that, if you had “to seek out the most efficacious means of removing every prudential check to population,—if you had wished to accelerate its march by a wilful and wicked encouragement to heedless and improvident marriages, you could not devise any more perfect than are afforded by the Poor Laws, as administered in this country.” It is admitted, indeed, that these expressions refer to the old Law in England,—not to the amended Law; but the argument which I had employed—that even the old Poor Laws in England could not have acted as so powerful a bounty on population as had been supposed, otherwise the population could not have remained so clearly within the limits of the means of subsistence in the country as it has done, and L.2,300,000 could not have been suddenly withdrawn from the poor by the new act, without causing much suffering,—is at once set aside, because “it would be in the face of Lord Brougham's declaration, above quoted, to suppose that the law, as it stood, did not operate as an encouragement to marriage, and greatly increase the population.”

No doubt, it may appear presumptuous, particularly to men of the legal profession, to make assertions in the face of a declaration of a Lord Chancellor; but the point now in dispute, is a question not of law but of facts, and of the logical inference from facts; and I therefore take the liberty of deliberately repeating the assertion, that, if the poor of England and Wales had been living for 250 years under the influence of the “greatest stimulus to population which the wit of man could devise,” it never could have happened, (consistently with what we know of the powers of reproduction granted to our species) that those countries should, at the end of that time, have been dependent on an enormous immigration from Ireland (where, during all that time, there were no Poor Laws), for any signs of a redundant population. Still less could it have happened, that the native population of those countries should have shewn unequivocal signs of redundancy and general abject destitution, at the commencement of that time, which had nearly disappeared before its close.

It is more important, however, than any reference to the opinions of individuals, to attend to the farther assertion of Mr Monypenny, that my belief of the English Poor Law not having greatly encouraged marriage, is in the "face of the clearest evidence." This evidence is not here specified, but I presume the expressions relate to the statements in various reports to the House of Commons and Government, of early and improvident marriages having been *comparatively* common in various parts of England, while the old system of out-door relief to able-bodied men, without any adequate test of their destitution, was in force; and of the *diminished frequency of such marriages*, since the amended law has come into operation, and the relief to the able-bodied been confined to the workhouses. I have no doubt of the correctness of these statements, having formerly expressed my belief that a legal provision, which supports in idleness able-bodied men, who can find work if they please, must necessarily act as a real bounty on population; and no one can be more thoroughly convinced than I am of the importance of that change on the old law, which imposed a test of destitution as preliminary to all relief to able-bodied men. Whether the workhouse may ultimately be found to be the only test, is more doubtful; but I believe it to be, in general, the best that has yet been devised. But I beg it may be observed, *first*, that these statements relate to the operation of a part of the English law *which has now been repealed*; *secondly*, that although there have been, no doubt, a *considerable number* of imprudent marriages owing to this cause in England, the facts above stated shew that these could not have been *so numerous*, or so great a national evil, as the imprudent marriages dependent on abject destitution in other countries; and, *lastly*, that any one who inquires may be easily convinced that a very great number of those young persons in England who, as we are assured, now *refrain from marriage* in consequence of the change of the law, are *children of paupers, accustomed to certain artificial wants*; and we are very certain, from facts above stated, would not have refrained from marriage, if they had been the *children of beggars*, as I believe, for the reasons above given, that they, and more than they, would have been, if no legal provision for the poor had existed in England.

The only other observation, in this part of Mr Monypenny's pamphlet, which seems to demand notice, is, that "although recklessness and degradation may be *one* occasion of marriage, they are not the *only* occasion of it." The truth of this observation I hope that few married men will be inclined to dispute; but I beg to say, that the only question of political importance is, as to the *comparative frequency* of those marriages which may be referred to this cause, and of those for which other reasons

may be assigned ; and this question, I apprehend, can only be answered by such appeals to *experience* as I have attempted to make in my former work, and which have met with no farther notice in the pamphlet under consideration, than the observations on which I have now commented.

Having thus considered what has been advanced in this pamphlet on the subject of the effects of poor-laws on population, I hope I shall have credit for a better motive than personal vanity when I add, that I have received from many persons, well acquainted with the doctrines of political economists on the subject, and well aware of the paramount importance of a clear understanding on this point,—the assurance that their opinions, if previously opposed to mine, have been changed, or if unsettled, have been fixed by the statements and reasonings which I have adduced ; and therefore, that they acquiesce in the practical inference, that there ought to be a great change in the extent of legal provision for the poor in Scotland.

I shall trust to the kind consideration of the writers, or their correspondents, for excusing my making short extracts from a few of these letters, from men whose names, if I had felt at liberty to publish them, would have given much weight to their opinions.

1. “ I have long been satisfied that there was something radically wrong connected with the condition of the poor in this part of the island, and, amidst contending theories, I was never able to satisfy my own mind as to the real cause of the evil, or as to the limits and extent of the remedial measures that ought to be resorted to. I cannot but think that you have succeeded to a great extent, in solving these difficult problems, and I look upon your essay, therefore, as one of the most important contributions that has been made to this important department of the great sciences of Christian philanthropy and political economy.”

2. “ Few of Dr Alison’s facts are novel to me. Indeed, with many of them I was made familiarly acquainted some years ago, by my own experience as a visitor of the poor in Edinburgh. But he has not merely seen for himself, but thought and judged for himself ; and where I merely doubted and paused, the dupe of philosophical sophistry, he has, by dint of fearless, yet humble and guarded research, proved how coherent are the maxims of sound philosophy and the precepts of religion.”

3. “ Your general argument is, I think, irresistible, being grounded on positive facts and reasonings on the known and proved principles of human nature.” “ We abused the Poor Law in England till it became past all bearing ;” “ then came the very general opinion that all Poor Laws were mischievous ; and the opinion was backed by reasonings from the opinions of Malthus.” “ I was myself a

convert to such reasonings ;” “ you have brought me back to the right faith. The fear of lowering his condition is an admirable preventive check against imprudent marriages in the middle ranks, and among educated men. But sink a man below a certain level, and (as there always is left a little hope in the human breast) he thinks he never can be worse ; or perhaps he drowns all thought of the future, and, as he is sinking in the gulf of misery, naturally lays hold of any twig that may stay him for a moment. This is the precise view taken by a French economical writer (I think Baron de Stael), who, in speaking of the poor Irishman, says, *il cherche dans les bras de sa femme quelque soulagement pour ses misères*. In this way extreme poverty and destitution become the very stimulus of early marriages. For the rest of my life, I shall distrust the reasonings of economists. They state certain principles, which may be perfectly true ; but in their application to individual cases, they may go to the very antipodes of truth, by overlooking some little disturbing force, arising out of the complicated movements of human passion and human will.”

4. “ I have been particularly pleased with the induction by which it is *demonstrated*, that a certain *standard of comfort* among the poor is necessary to produce that moral restraint, in which consists the preventive check against excessive increase of the population. This doctrine seems to me to be equally important and new.”

5. “ I never read a more triumphant pleading in my life than your pamphlet on the poor. You have converted me, and I doubt not, will convert many.”

6. “ I considered myself too well-founded a Malthusian, to be shaken in my principles by arguments which your humanity might have led you to draw, from the insulated cases of particularly circumstanced communities.” “ But having read, with the greatest interest, your dispassionate investigation of this very difficult question, with the complicated circumstances and relations growing out of it, I have found myself happy in arriving at the conviction of your having most satisfactorily made out your case. Your statistic fact, of the English Poor Law having had no effect to increase the ordinary number of births during the 250 years it had been in existence, while the want of all provision for the poor in Ireland, had been operating in that country with such directly opposite result, accompanied with unequivocal evidence of the reckless improvidence, engendered by the hopeless destitution, in which the overgrown population was there compelled to exist—has so satisfied me of your principle, in the way you have guarded it, being the right one, that my anxiety now is, that your views should be made as universally known as possible.”

7. "I have read Dr Alison's pamphlet with attention, and agree with him, that some legal provision for the poor, in addition to the present laws, is become necessary in Scotland. The size of the great towns, the fluctuations of manufactures, and the change of habits in the rural population, farmers as well as landlords, render some measure of that kind indispensable. I agree with him also, that the best security against improvident marriages, is to have the labouring classes in the habitual enjoyment of comforts, beyond what is merely necessary for animal existence."

I should not have dwelt so long on this fundamental point, if it had not appeared to me, that Mr Monypenny and others, who are adverse to any extension of the legal provision for the poor, although not urging the argument as to its effect on population with any confidence, are yet constantly under the influence of a vague and indefinite apprehension as to the progress of Pauperism, which cannot be justified, unless that principle be held to be established.

II. I beg to remind the reader, that to one argument, as I think of paramount importance, drawn from the experience of other countries, both those in which a legal provision exists, and those in which it does not exist, Mr Monypenny declines giving any answer, further than this, that "our own experience, during many ages, has established the preference due, *in our case*, to voluntary contributions, as the means of relieving the ordinary poor. If we had had no experience of our own, or if we had been taught by it, that our institutions are faulty, it might be well to follow the usages of other states. But when the wisdom of our practice has been established, *both in our own opinion and that of our neighbours*, after an experience of upwards of a century and a half, we cannot be expected to be moved by the practice of other nations, of which we know little." (P. 86.)

On this part of the subject I have some grounds for complaint of the way in which the arguments I have adduced have been met. By one gentleman I am told that the experience on which they are grounded is "limited, local, casual, and temporary." When I refer to the experience of many other nations, I am told that it is quite sufficient for us, that in our own opinion, and that of our neighbours, the wisdom of our practice has been established by experience. When I refer to the experience of our neighbours in Ireland, I am told that "it would have been more satisfactory if the argument had been conducted with direct reference to the habits of the poor in Scotland." And then, when it is wished to have a complete inquiry into the state of pauperism in Scotland itself, we are told, at least in various quarters, that this is quite unnecessary, because the provision for the poor, and their condi-

tion, are perfectly well known to the proper authorities in Scotland, and nothing can be better.\* It is neither easy nor desirable, in this as in other cases, to hit upon an argument which shall suit the tastes of all opponents; but I must take the liberty of saying, that my assertion is, that experience shews our institutions, for the relief of poverty and suffering, to be *very faulty*; that it is a mere *petitio principii* to meet that statement by asserting the reverse, *without examining the facts*; and that no facts on this subject can be more deserving of the attention of the people of Scotland than those which give a *comparative view of the condition of the poor* in other countries, and under different systems of management, as contrasted with ours. I therefore refer with confidence to the facts stated on this subject in my former Paper (p. 86 to 102 of second edition), as forming a broad and firm foundation for practical inferences; and shall add here an extract from the Report made by Mr Nicholls to Lord John Russell in 1838, "On the Condition of the Labouring Classes, and the Provision for the Poor, in Holland."

"Nothing can exceed the cleanliness, the personal propriety, and the apparent comfort of the people of Holland. I did not see a house or a fence out of repair, or a garden that was not carefully cultivated. We met no ragged or dirty persons, nor any drunken man; neither did I see any indication that drunkenness is the vice of any portion of the people. I was assured that bastardy was almost unknown; and, although we were during all hours of the day much in the public thoroughfares, we saw only two beggars, and they, in manners and appearance, scarcely came within the designation. The Dutch people appear to be strongly attached to their government; *and few countries possess a population in which the domestic and social duties are discharged with such constancy*. A scrupulous economy and cautious foresight seem to be the characteristic virtues of every class. To spend their full annual income, is accounted a species of crime. The same systematic prudence pervades every part of the community, agricultural and commercial; and thus the Dutch people are enabled to bear up against the most formidable physical difficulties, and to secure a larger amount of individual comfort than probably exists in any other country." This being the condition of the people, let us observe what is the nature of the provision which has existed for several centuries for the relief of poverty, and how far these happy results can be ascribed to the *smallness of the allowances* granted to the poor.

"The institutions for the relief of indigence are *numerous* in Holland, and consist of *hospices* for the aged and infirm, orphan-

\* See e.g. the Resolutions of the Aberdeenshire and Perthshire County Meetings, 30th April 1840.



houses, workhouses of towns, *depots de mendicité*, or district workhouses, the poor colonies, and private charitable institutions." "Many of these institutions, in their structure and appearance, rather resemble palaces than poorhouses, and they form one of the most prominent characteristics of the great towns. In Amsterdam, especially, the most superficial observer cannot fail to be struck with the magnitude and number of these buildings."

Mr Nicholls here omits to mention an extensive system of *out-door relief*, authorized and enforced *by law*, partly in money, but chiefly in fuel, provisions, and clothing, distributed, in small weekly allowances, by numerous agents acting gratuitously, and very similar to the relief given here by the Society for the Destitute Sick, but destined for the support of the *indigent members* of the community, as well as for relief in sickness ;\*—the workhouses being always held in reserve for those whose character is bad.

The sum annually expended for the relief of the poor in these different establishments, is 4s. 4d. a-head on the whole population, *i. e.* in proportion to the population, nearly four times the amount of the Poor's Fund in Scotland, while the value of money there is higher. It is true, as stated by Mr Nicholls, that a great part of this fund is derived, as in other countries abroad, from endowments, and from voluntary contributions, which are added to the compulsory provision ; but the proceeds of the *direct tax* are L.150,000 a-year, *i. e.* considerably more than the *whole* amount of the Poor's Fund in Scotland, while the population is less ; and I formerly observed that the effects, whether good or bad, of a fixed and uniform provision for the poor, depend on the certainty with which that relief can be anticipated, not on the source from which it comes, which is very often unknown to the receiver.

The condition of the able-bodied pauper in Holland, who is only relieved in the workhouse, or in the penal colonies connected with these, is purposely made inferior to that of the able-bodied labourer who subsists on the fruits of his own industry. But "no sense of degradation is attached to the orphan establishments, which are calculated to invite rather than discourage dependence. Our visits to them, and to the *hospices* (for the aged and infirm), enabled us to ascertain that the arrangements for the comfort of the inmates are in every respect much superior to those enjoyed by other individuals of the same class."

But setting aside, as he does, all such evidence from abroad, Mr Monypenny seems, in this as in other passages, to place much reliance on the supposed *firm conviction* of our neighbours in England, that our system of management of the poor is wiser and better than theirs. That he is much mistaken in supposing this to be a general opinion among those of the English people who

\* See App. F. to First Report of the Poor-Law Commissioners, p. 581.

have any *practical* acquaintance with the difference of the two, I shall afterwards endeavour more fully to shew. At present, as a commentary on the assertion that the English people prefer our system to their own, I shall quote a single letter, with which (unsolicited on my part) I have been favoured by a medical man (Dr De Vitre) of whose talents and intelligence I am well aware, and who has had ample opportunities of witnessing the working of both systems, having been, as he says, daily in contact with the poor for many years, at first when a student in Edinburgh, afterwards when practising for five years in the south of Scotland, and lastly as a physician and a guardian of the poor, ever since the new act came into operation, in Lancaster :

“I am afraid you will meet with much opposition to your views, as I am well aware that there is a calculating philosophy in the north, even among persons otherwise benevolently disposed, which, more especially when combined with a *total ignorance of the blessings conferred by an ample provision for the poor*, will materially obstruct your progress. Cases of destitution, such as you describe, are *utterly unknown here*, and excepting in large manufacturing districts, a stranger would be apt to suspect that there was no poverty in the land. But I can testify to the *unexaggerated* truth of your statements regarding the poverty and destitution of the more obscure parts of Edinburgh, as I have witnessed many a harrowing scene there, when pursuing my studies in Edinburgh before 1828.”

In a subsequent letter, after I had drawn his attention to the statement, as to the general preference, in England, of the Scotch system, he says, “It may be very well for certain parties in Scotland to work themselves into the belief that people in England believe their system for the relief of the poor to be preferable to what exists here. I can assure them they are only grossly deceiving themselves.” “I can only say that I never heard such an opinion expressed as you allude to, *nor do I believe an Englishman could be found*, bold enough to undertake or advocate the Utopian plan of recommending the poor of this country to voluntary charity. The idea that the hand of charity is paralysed in consequence of the poor laws, is perfectly visionary ; there is probably no country in the world in which that hand is so widely extended as in England.” “I can moreover assert, that if there is one tax more than another paid without a grudge, it is the tax for the support of the poor ; which has been, and is, strongly exemplified in the great and powerful resistance made to the Poor-Law Amendment Act, because by *decreasing* the rates, it was thought to be in some measure encroaching on the comforts to which the poor are thought to be fairly entitled.”

As a contrast to these statements, I shall add a few sentences

from a letter, likewise unsolicited by me, from another old pupil, of known ability and intelligence, and likewise a guardian of the poor, but in a county town in Scotland, Dr Macrobin of Aberdeen.

“ I rejoice in the appearance of your appeal in behalf of our shamefully neglected poor, and God grant it may be the means of effecting the revolution you desire.” “ I can, indeed, bear testimony to many of the facts you have brought forward, both as they came under my cognizance when visiting patients with you as a pupil at the New Town Dispensary, and also since coming to this town to practise.” He then goes on to use language stronger than I chuse to publish, to express his conviction of the extent of disease and mortality amongst the Scotch poor, often extending to the higher ranks, and referable simply to destitution, for which there is no adequate provision.

Supported by such testimony, from men who have seen more of the condition of the poor in England and Scotland than any members of the Legislature, I feel justified in saying, that what are called in Scotland the “ innumerable ills” of the English system (as now administered) sit light, after all, on the English people, who, we are told, have been groaning under them for 250 years; and that those persons in England who prefer the Scotch system to their own, are neither numerous, nor well informed as to the *practical* working of either. And I will add, that a review of the practice of other nations clearly shews, that Scotland is an *exception* to the best regulated parts of the civilized world in this respect; and that in all those parts of Europe where the legal provision is absent, as in Ireland, or only partially introduced, as in Scotland, France, Italy, and Spain, the alternative is mendicity, in one form or another, with such an extent and intensity of human suffering, as imposes a heavy responsibility on the advocates of the voluntary system.

III. It is next to be observed, that “ the existence and long prevalence of ‘ very great and appalling distress’ in Edinburgh and Glasgow” are “ *admitted in its fullest extent*,” and that Mr Monypenny does me the honour to say, that the arguments by which I have enforced the necessity of a cure for so serious an evil are “ powerful and resistless.” After such an admission, applicable to one-fifth of the population of Scotland, it seems somewhat rash to repeat the assertions, that experience has shewn nothing to be faulty in our institutions for the relief of distress, and that “ the wisdom of our practice has been established.” But admitting the *absolute necessity* of “ a remedy for this local and temporary malady,” it is maintained, certainly with perfect fairness, that “ the fitness of the particular remedy which has been suggested may be denied.” It is

then said that "the appeal which has been made to the benevolence of the higher ranks will prove *perfectly adequate* for the accomplishment of the object immediately in view;"—that "there is not so much a want of charity among the wealthy, as a difficulty of knowing how to go systematically and effectually about it;—that this charity will receive a proper aim and direction from the Association lately formed in Edinburgh; and that measures will doubtless be taken, both for alleviating the existing distress, and preventing the recurrence of it." (P. 7.)

Additional assessment is, however, by all means to be avoided. "There is little reason to be surprised," that, even when a contagious fever raged, and was attended with such fatal effects, "under a regular assessment of six per cent. lately augmented, the magistrates should have declined the proposal to that effect, and trusted to the necessary means being supplied from other sources." In short, an additional voluntary subscription in Edinburgh itself is the only remedy suggested; and the Association lately formed is to take no cognizance of pauperism in Scotland generally, but to become an additional charitable institution in Edinburgh, burdening the charitable inhabitants (and only them) with an additional subscription-book annually; and there cannot be a doubt, that this will prove a perfectly adequate remedy for the "very great, long-continued, and appalling distress," which has been described.

Now these admissions and anticipations are of the highest importance. If the *absolute necessity* of a cure for so serious an evil be admitted, and if it shall be shewn on inquiry (as I confidently expect it will), that the evil, although liable to aggravation by local and temporary causes, is neither local nor temporary;—that the depressed, and destitute, and gradually deteriorating condition of a large portion of the poor, giving the liability to wide-spreading contagious fever, extends to a great part of the population of Scotland; that, as existing in the great towns, it is continually fed by the influx from the smaller towns and from the country parishes, and cannot be effectually relieved in the former until more efficient means of relief are provided in the latter;—and that "the difficulty of knowing how to go systematically and effectually about the relief of poverty and suffering," involving, as it does, the inequality and general inadequacy of the means of relief existing throughout the country, cannot be overcome without a general and uniform augmentation of the provision for the poor,—and is, in fact, *the difficulty*, which has suggested to almost all other civilized nations the necessity of a provision which shall be armed with the authority, and administered with the uniformity, of law;—then we may trust, that, in consistency with the admission of the "absolute necessity of a cure for the evil" existing in Edinburgh

and Glasgow being found, we may have the honour of admitting the author of this pamphlet into the ranks of the Association which has been formed "for obtaining an official Inquiry into the Pauperism of Scotland."

Now, all these points are susceptible, as I believe, of easy proof. In the first place, the population of the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow constitutes nearly a fifth of the population of Scotland. If we add to these Paisley, Greenock, Perth, Dundee, Aberdeen, and Inverness, in all which towns the condition of the poor is very similar to that of the poor in Edinburgh, and their liability to contagious fever ascertained, we at once extend our views to one-fourth of the population; and if we inquire into the condition of the unemployed or impotent poor in most of the smaller towns throughout the country, I shall presently give reasons for believing it to be nearly on the same footing; and thus, at least one-half the population of Scotland is involved in our inquiry; while, of the country population, not less than 200,000 (inhabiting a large part of the Highlands and Islands) are in a state of even more uniform destitution than almost any class of the urban population.

Anxious as I am to avoid any exaggerated statement, I think myself justified in asserting, that the lowest class of society, in more than one-half of the population of Scotland, during at least a part of the year, is in a state of lamentable destitution, for which there is no adequate provision; and it will presently appear, that the portion of the population, among whom no such destitution appears, is, partly at least, preserved from it by the continual absorption of their poorest members into the larger towns.

That the evil is not a merely temporary one, may be judged from the facts, which I formerly adduced, as to the state of the poor, and particularly as to the repeated and increasing visitations of fever, in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dundee; and I can easily perceive that I shall be borne out in the assertion, that it has been progressively increasing for the last twenty-five years, from facts which have more recently come to my knowledge, not only in these but in the other larger towns of Scotland.

In the next place, if we propose to remedy the evil, as existing in Edinburgh or in any other town in Scotland, by an annual voluntary subscription, in addition to those already existing, all those who are practically acquainted with the working of the charitable institutions already existing, will meet us at once with the following insurmountable objections:—

1. It is known from experience, that the burden will then fall exclusively on a certain portion of the inhabitants, already too heavily burdened, by reason of their liberality, in comparison with the rest; and that, partly in consequence of their sense of this injustice, partly of the incessant demands made on their bounty

from different quarters and for different objects, the sums raised from them,—particularly when no epidemic disease bringing danger directly to their own doors is present,—will be both uncertain and insufficient. “Demands on individuals,” says Dr M’Gill, “which are constant and considerable, are yielded to with reluctance, and at length, very frequently and by great numbers, declined. The poor are neglected, or their wants very inadequately supplied. The funds, inadequate as they are, proceed from a few benevolent individuals, who are burdened beyond their proportion, for an object in which all are interested.” If Mr Monypenny had seen as many illustrations as I have, of the truth of these remarks, even as applicable to the medical charities of Edinburgh (which are the best supported, but are very dependent on the aid of the medical students), I cannot doubt that his faith in the efficacy of the voluntary system would have been much shaken.

I shall not repeat here the statements I have formerly made (p. 58 et seq. and p. 75 et seq. of 2d edition), as to the tried inefficacy of the voluntary system of relief in large towns; but shall merely mention, in illustration of this point, that last winter, when the extent of destitution in Edinburgh (certainly not greater than I have known it in several other winters, but previously unsuspected by many of the higher ranks) was a pretty general subject of discussion, a subscription was commenced, and the proceeds entrusted chiefly to members of the Destitute Sick Society, to be applied in food, fuel, and clothing, and generally in very scanty allowances, among the most miserable of the poor. In a few weeks about L.600 were raised; and it was then found to be impossible to procure any additional funds, and the relief given was necessarily and abruptly stopped, at a time when, so far from the destitution being adequately relieved, many very destitute families had not even heard of the subscription; and when the number of applicants was so great, that, even if they had had sufficient funds at their command, the experienced gentlemen who distributed the relief professed themselves unable to continue their exertions, or to afford the time and attention necessary to discriminate the cases most in need of assistance.

2. It is equally well known by experience, that any effectual relief of the “great and appalling distress” existing in Edinburgh (the condition of the poor in other parts of the country remaining unchanged), would be immediately followed by such an inundation of destitute people, half employed or partially or wholly disabled, from other parts of the country, as would very soon completely absorb the additional provision which might have been made; and that thus this partial and temporary remedy would really in the end “aggravate the evil it professed to relieve.”

We know that this continued influx takes place, even when it is known that many of the poor of our great towns are in misery, and suffering under epidemic contagious fever; and common sense teaches us that it cannot but be increased, if the condition of the poor in these towns is really ameliorated, and their tendency to such epidemics diminished; nor do I see how it can be prevented, consistently with humanity or the liberty of the subject, as long as the "smallness of the allowances" in the country districts, and the law of settlement, remain as at present.

That the destitution of the great towns in Scotland is thus continually swelled from the rest of the country, and becomes, therefore, a true index of the inadequacy and uncertainty of the provisions existing for the relief of poverty generally throughout the country, is shewn by some facts which I formerly stated (p. 106 of 2d edition); but this is a point of such importance, and a right understanding of it is so essential to enable us to form a judgment of the proper remedies to be applied to the "great and appalling distress," the existence of which, and the necessity of a remedy for which, are fully admitted by Mr Monypenny, that I must illustrate it somewhat farther, availing myself of statistical statements, with which I have been favoured by different friends.

I presume it will not be denied that the parochial authorities, in most parts of Scotland, habitually act on the principle which has been so zealously inculcated on them by Mr Monypenny and others, that pauperism is a *disease* of the body-politic, often attaining great malignity, and requiring desperate remedies, and which it is their duty as much as possible, within their own jurisdictions, to *prevent* or restrain; nor do I suppose that any of them are very scrupulous about permitting the transference of this disease to the neighbouring districts. They have been taught to pride themselves on the small number of their paupers, and the "smallness of the allowances" which they make to them; and to believe, that the best administration of the affairs of the poor is, not that under which there is the least *poverty*, or the least *suffering*, but simply that under which there is the least *pauperism*. This simple rule of conduct, however repugnant to the feelings, is certainly justifiable, as long as it is held to be proved that pauperism (*i. e.* admission of the poor to legal relief) necessarily and hurtfully stimulates population, and so increases the evil it is intended to relieve; but I apprehend that it cannot be justified on any other principle. That principle, however, I maintain to be the very reverse of the truth; and we have seen, that Mr Monypenny has hardly attempted to defend it, otherwise than by referring to the authority of the eminent men who are well known to have maintained it.

That the allowances to the poor are generally regulated by this

principle in most parts of Scotland, however, is easily shewn. I quoted in my former pamphlet the statements of Captain Thomson, Treasurer to the House of Refuge, and of Mr Wigham, to this effect; and the complaint of the Committee on Pauperism at Ayr, that the kirk-sessions of some parishes “half-starve their poor, in order to keep down the allowances.” I may quote, in confirmation of these statements, a letter in the Ayr Observer, which is the better authority for my purpose, as the author is by no means friendly to legal provisions, but wishes the whole relief to the poor to be on the footing of voluntary charity. “The excellence of the Scottish system is generally acknowledged. But in what does this excellence consist? Simply in giving a penny farthing a-day instead of sixpence. Certain it is, that such relief cannot contemplate raising the condition of the poor, or saving them from starvation and death, but, on the contrary, *would seem only to embitter the passage to both.* Most of the managers of the poor in landward parishes, with whom the penny farthing a-day is the maximum, are so tied down to the imagined excellence of giving this miserable pittance, that *they never feel any compunctions on refusal, however painful may be the distress.*”—(Ayr Observer, May 5. 1840.) Similar statements as to the amount of relief awarded, and its inadequacy to support life without “begging or petty thieving,” are to be found in the letters of a very intelligent correspondent in the Dumfries and Galloway Courier for April 1840.

A very detailed and instructive statement has been drawn up by Mr R. Chambers, of the state of the poor of a single small town in an agricultural district, which may be taken as a specimen of many. “Out of 101 cases of extreme necessity, in a population of 2000, an outdoor pension, *at an average less than half of what is needed to support a bare existence,* is extended only to 38. There are other 86 cases of less or occasional necessity, *to which no parochial relief is extended.*” “It is at the same time found, that *only in a few cases out of those described (not more than one-fifth), do the relatives of the parties afford any degree of succour.*” “One or two slender meals of porridge or potatoes, with occasionally a little tea, or a bowl of thin broth, form the diet of a day with most of these people. It appears a system of protracted starvation.” “A large part of the aliment of the indigent class is *contributed by neighbours,* a little better off than themselves.” These aged or disabled persons are generally of good character, patient and resigned; and, partly in consequence of previous habits, partly of extreme poverty, intemperance is almost unknown among them. Thus, while the *pau-pers* are only 38, or one-twelfth of the whole number of householders, the *destitute poor* are 187, or about two-fifths. Again,



"the female field-labourers get 10d. a-day, which barely suffices to support and clothe them during the time when they have work. In winter, when there is no work, they have no resource but charity. *But for the broth-pots of their neighbours*, they would starve outright." "Theirs is a well-defined case of occasional destitution, *but the parish does little or nothing for them.*" Lastly, in a severe winter, the proportion of the population who find it necessary, and are willing, to become dependent on the charity of the rest, is not less than 25 per cent. of the whole. "Such is the state of the poor in a small rural town in Scotland, under a system of management which has been often represented as peculiarly calculated to *keep down pauperism*, and in contrast with which the English system is believed to be only a monstrous abuse." Is it surprising that he should add, "Surely there must be some strange misunderstanding respecting a system under which such results can be found?"

I have received information of the condition of the poor in several other small towns being equally destitute and comfortless. I have before me a letter from a different part of the country, detailing the "sad complaints made by an assistant or missionary in a small town, of the scenes of misery he was often called on to witness, without the means of alleviating them. He said he had often in vain remonstrated with the heritors, and one of them boasted to him that they had some hundred pounds in the bank, *but they were determined not to encourage pauperism.*" Again, in the northern district of Scotland, as is observed in the Report to the General Assembly, "a considerable proportion of the parishes make no provision for the poor at all. Assessments are almost unknown in the greater part of this district; and the poverty of the people is such as to preclude the possibility of their contributing at the church-doors more than will afford to the poor a miserable and uncertain pittance, in some cases scarcely appreciable as a means of the pauper's maintenance.\* The main sources of relief consist of benevolent gifts made, from time to time, in *certain* cases, by *some* of the great landed proprietors, or the distribution of funds collected in the Low Country, and in England, on occasions of extreme and extraordinary distress."—The condition of the people in these situations is very generally one of "such wretchedness as could not fail, in almost any other country, to produce acts of lawless violence."—(Fullarton and Baird.)

\* As in the case formerly quoted, of Kilmuir, in the Isle of Skye, where 60 paupers (out of 200 that ought to be on the roll if there were funds) receive L.3 a-year among them—1s. a-year each; or at Lochmarea, where the paupers on the roll are 80, and have 2s. 6d. a-year each.—(Fullarton and Baird, p. 49.) Indeed, throughout the six northern *Synods* the average allowance to each pauper on the permanent roll is 9s. 4d. a-year.—(Report to General Assembly, p. 16.)

It is quite true that, in many parts of Scotland, there are resident proprietors, both in the smaller towns and the country districts, who make up, more or less, for the deficiency of the legal provision ; but it is equally certain that there are many others in which this “*accident heureux*” does not exist, the proprietors either being absentees, or feeling little interest in the poor. Thus Messrs Fullarton and Baird state, that out of 195 proprietors in 50 parishes of the Highlands and Islands, 149 are non-resident. They add, that they willingly bear testimony to the great personal respectability and enlightened views of the factors who reside on these properties ; but that “*much as may be their inclination to do good, they have little in their power, while the absentees carry the rents abroad with them.*”—(Pp. 52, 53.)

Now, whatever may be thought, in theory, of this state of things, no one, who has carefully attended to the facts, will deny that the following *practical* consequences uniformly result ;—*first*, that whatever may be the number of *paupers*, the number of dependent *poor* in these circumstances (*i. e.* of persons suffering want, and dependent, more or less, on money which is not earned, but given in charity), is great ;\* *secondly*, that the burden of the poor (whether *paupers* or not) thus taken off the higher ranks of society, falls the more heavily on the lower, or even on the labouring part of the population (as in Ireland), and depresses the condition and habits of the whole body of the lower ranks ; and *lastly*, that many of the unemployed poor, having no claim (or none which affords them any resource) on their own parishes, and many of the feeble or partially disabled poor, who see what kind of provision awaits them in their old age at home, emigrate to the larger towns, or the more fully peopled districts, where there is a greater variety, and therefore a greater *chance*, of employment, where the charity of individuals, or of institutions, affords a prospect of resource in sickness, and where a settlement, once obtained, secures some provision, however scanty, for old age. The description given by Messrs Fullarton and Baird of the Highland cottar, “*turned houseless and homeless into the wilderness,*” is applicable to what I have myself seen of many families from all parts of Scotland. “*Ten to one but, after*

\* From the letters already quoted in the Dumfries and Galloway Courier, it appears to be 6 or 7 per cent. even in one of the best regulated parts of the country ; and in the northern districts it certainly comprehends a majority of the population.

In the small town described by Mr Chambers, we have seen that the proportion of the population who have occasionally required charitable assistance, *and been willing to apply for, and accept of it, is not less than 25 per cent.* Indeed, I believe it will be found in almost all the smaller towns in Scotland that during the winter, and especially on occasion of any unusual check to the ordinary employments of the poor, the indications of redundant population are greater than in England.

being long driven from place to place, the poor man is finally compelled to take refuge in some manufacturing town, where he sinks into the condition of a common labourer, or something worse ; his family becomes corrupted and vicious, and the scene not unfrequently closes by his dying in prison, or of a broken heart.” —(Remarks on the Evils affecting the Highlands, &c., p. 6.)

That a very considerable immigration from country districts to great towns must always take place, is indeed inevitable ; but in Scotland, it is easy to prove, that the larger towns are burdened with the country poor in a much greater degree than the existing demand for labour requires, or the healthy circulation of labour implies, in consequence of two causes, *first*, of the deficient provision for the unemployed and disabled poor in country districts,—and, *secondly*, of the settlement by three years’ residence, fixing on the towns the families of many men who have been disabled or died after a few years’ residence there, but who, by the laws of England, and of most other countries possessing the legal provision, would for the most part have been thrown back on their former domicile for support.

Thus I have stated that, in a few hours’ search, I found fourteen families in Edinburgh, unable for any really profitable employment, and living in a very destitute state, belonging to parishes in other parts of the country, but preferring to throw themselves on the precarious employment, and the charity which they could procure here in the mean time, and struggling to obtain a settlement here. My statement to this effect, I find fully confirmed by several of the clergymen of Edinburgh, and of the visitors of the Destitute Sick Society, who have returned answers to Queries lately circulated by the Association for Inquiring into Pauperism. For example, in answer to the query, “Are there many who live in Edinburgh, entitled to assistance in other towns, or country parishes, but not obtaining, or not claiming it?” The Rev. Dr Brunton, and the Rev. Mr Hunter of the Tron Church parish, answer, “There is no doubt that there are ;” and one of the most experienced of the Destitute Sick Society visitors states :—“In country parishes very little is given to the poor ; consequently a great number resort to Edinburgh to get upon the charitable institutions, until they obtain a parish right.” Captain Thomson states more specifically in regard to the House of Refuge, that “of every 100 individuals received there, 65 are natives of country parishes or foreigners ; of 230 inmates at one time, 93 were found to have been less than one year in Edinburgh, and 80 less than six months ; and that many of the most destitute poor, even the lame and blind, who are entitled to aid from country parishes, refuse to leave Edinburgh, giving as a reason (what the statements above quoted shew to be, at least



49 of the 191 patients, not natives of Edinburgh, stated that they were labouring under their present diseases before they came to Edinburgh, and that their object in coming here was to avail themselves of the advantages of the Infirmary. 42 of these were males; and 7 were females. Of the above 282 patients, 60 were in the Fever-Wards. Of these there were—

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Born in Edinburgh, - - - -	8	18	26
Born elsewhere, but had passed the prime of their lives in Edinburgh, - - - -	2	10	12
Born elsewhere, and had <i>not</i> passed the prime of their lives in Edinburgh, - - - -	8	14	22
	<u>18</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>60</u>

	Males.	Females.
1. Born in other large towns, - - -		4
2. " " the Highlands and Islands, - - -	2	2
3. " " other parts of Scotland, - - -	2	12
4. " " Ireland, - - -	5	5
5. " " England and Wales, - - -	1	1
	<u>10</u>	<u>24</u>
Add those born in Edinburgh, - - -	8	18
	<u>18</u>	<u>42</u>

*Inmates of the Medical and Surgical Wards, Glasgow Royal Infirmary, 18th April 1840.*

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Born in Glasgow, - - - -	21	17	38
Born elsewhere, but who have passed the prime of their life in Glasgow, - - - -	20	22	42
Born elsewhere, and who have <i>not</i> passed the prime of their life in Glasgow, - - - -	69	29	98
	<u>110</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>178</u>

	Males.	Females.
1. Born in other large towns, - - -	10	9
2. " " the Highlands, - - -	15	10
2. " " other parts of Scotland, - - -	29	20
4. " " Ireland, - - -	31	12
5. " " England and Wales, - - -	4	0
6. Foreigners, - - -	0	0
	<u>89</u>	<u>51</u>
Add born in Glasgow, - - -	21	17
	<u>110</u>	<u>68</u>

parents, others not; but almost all agree, to use the words of the Rev. Mr Guthrie, "that there are many cases of such extreme suffering among those not chargeable with intemperance."

*Fever Hospital, 18th April 1840.*

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Born in Glasgow, - - - - -	11	8	19
Born elsewhere, but who have passed their prime in Glasgow, - - - - -	12	12	24
Born elsewhere, and who have <i>not</i> passed their prime in Glasgow, - - - - -	46	43	89
	<hr/> 69	<hr/> 63	<hr/> 132

	Males.	Females.
1. Born in other large towns, - - -	14	12
2. " " the Highlands, - - -	6	7
3. " " other parts of Scotland, - - -	7	12
4. " " Ireland, - - -	28	21
5. " " England and Wales, - - -	3	3
6. " " Foreign countries, - - -	0	0
	<hr/> 58	<hr/> 55
Born in Glasgow, - - - - -	11	8
	<hr/> 69	<hr/> 63

These statements apply chiefly to the migratory poor, who are, as I believe, in many instances doomed to wander by the deficiency of provision for them at home. The following Table, which was compiled with much labour and pains by my venerable friend Dr Wallace, now a Manager of the Edinburgh Charity Workhouse, shews how small a proportion of the burden now *permanently* resting on that institution has been imposed on us by our native population.

*The number of Paupers from each County on the List of Out-Pensioners of the Charity Workhouse of Edinburgh, classed according to the Population of the Counties.*

	Population in 1831.	Poor.
Edinburgh Parish, - - - - -	55,218	259
County of Edinburgh, exclusive of Parish, - - - - -	164,127	70
Lanark, - - - - -	316,819	31
Aberdeen, - - - - -	177,657	14
Ayr, - - - - -	145,055	9
Perth, - - - - -	142,894	50
Forfar, - - - - -	139,606	5
Renfrew, - - - - -	133,443	5
Fife, - - - - -	128,839	31
Argyll, - - - - -	100,973	8
Inverness, - - - - -	94,797	43
Ross and Cromarty, - - - - -	74,820	43
Dumfries, - - - - -	73,770	5
Stirling, - - - - -	72,621	7
Orkney and Shetland, - - - - -	58,239	16
Banff, - - - - -	48,604	4

Carry over, .

	Brought forward,	
Roxburgh, - - - - -	43,633	8
Kirkcudbright, - - - - -	40,590	4
Haddington, - - - - -	36,145	32
Wigton, - - - - -	36,258	3
Caithness, - - - - -	34,529	33
Elgin, - - - - -	34,231	4
Berwick, - - - - -	34,048	11
Dunbarton, - - - - -	33,211	1
Kincardine, - - - - -	31,431	2
Sutherland, - - - - -	25,518	31
Linlithgow, - - - - -	23,291	12
Clackmannan, - - - - -	14,729	1
Bute, - - - - -	14,151	1
Peebles, - - - - -	10,578	3
Nairn, - - - - -	9,354	3
Kinross, - - - - -	9,072	
Selkirk, - - - - -	6,833	1
Various places in Highlands, - - - - -	-	9
		<hr/>
Whole Scottish Poor, - - - - -	-	759
From England, - - - - -	-	26
Ireland, - - - - -	-	82
America, - - - - -	-	2
Born at Sea, - - - - -	-	2
		<hr/>
Whole number whose places of Birth have been ascertained, - - - - -	-	871

The place of birth of the paupers in this list was ascertained by inquiry at each individual when receiving the half-quarterly pension, at intervals of a fortnight preceding 6th May 1840, by me,

WILLIAM WALLACE,  
A Manager of the Charity Workhouse.

The records of the Charity Workhouse do not, unfortunately, enable us to judge how many of the families from the country now charged on the city of Edinburgh, had given it the full benefit of their labour, and how many had resided here only a few years before they became paupers, or had been nearly incapable of profitable labour before they came here; but it may be judged, from what has been already said, that a large proportion must have belonged to the latter classes, and should, in equity, and would in the practice of other countries, have been charged on their native parishes. The following documents from Perth and Aberdeen, shew how the same grievance presses on these towns.

One of the heritors of Perth, "who has had some share in the arrangements regarding the poor" in that city, writes to the Secretary of the Association here as follows: "This city has, for a great many years back, been *completely inundated* from the surrounding rural, especially Highland parishes. The way that this is done is not, it must be admitted, over commendable. Those in the secret of such matters in the country parishes *pay the rent of a house* for those they wish to billet on their neighbours, till a legal domicile is obtained, and then they throw off the mask,

and leave their *proteges* to the tender mercies of their adopted parish. From this convenient way of getting quit of them, some of these parishes have few or no poor of their own."

For the following very instructive table from Aberdeen, I am indebted to my friend Dr Macrobin; but its construction is due to the zeal and sagacity of Mr Urquhart, one of the bailies of that city.

*Abstract of the number and description of Poor on the Aberdeen Poor's Rate, 9th May 1840.*

No. 1. Natives of the city and neighbouring parish of Old Machar, including men and women of all classes, - - -	420
No. 2. Men from various other parishes who have spent the best of their days in Aberdeen, - - -	101
No. 3. Widows from do. do. who have do. do. -	236
No. 4. Lone Women, from do. do. do. do. -	74
	<hr/> 831
No. 5. Men from do. do. all past 40 years old, and most of them partly disabled ere they came to town to settle, -	72
No. 6. Widows from do. do. all past 40 years old, many of them widows, and most of them partly disabled before they came to town, -	252
No. 7. Lone Women from do. do. all past 40 years old, and most of them partly disabled before coming to settle in town, -	81
No. 8. Individuals of all classes who have obtained a bare residence (or little more), by having resided 3 years in town, -	182
No. 9. Women from various parishes who have been deserted by their husbands after obtaining a bare residence, - -	29
No. 10. Orphans on the funds of all classes, - - -	70
	<hr/> 686
Say 1517, being the total number on the roll, -	1517
The number of Children under 14 years of age, who are dependent on the cases, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6,* - - -	433
The do. do. Nos. 8 and 9, - - -	239
The do. do. who are bastards of women who have obtained a bare residence, No. 8, - - -	26
	<hr/> 698

It thus appears that fully two-fifths of the pauperism of Aberdeen consists of persons, or the children of persons, who not only are not natives of it, but have not given it the benefit of their labour during their better years.

These facts are, I think, sufficient to shew that the destitution and disease of the large towns in Scotland, whether coming under the charge of the voluntary or the legal charities, are not such temporary or local evils as they have been represented; and that the attempt to "alleviate the existing distress, and prevent its recurrence," by additional voluntary subscriptions in the great towns, without applying a remedy, of sure and uniform operation, to the source from whence it comes, can only augment that influx

\* It is to be observed that the children dependent on the cases 5 and 6, are to be regarded as *extraneous* poor, equally as those dependent on cases 8 and 9.



from without, in which it chiefly originates, and so ultimately lead to its aggravation.

In fact, it is only by observing that the city of Edinburgh is burdened, much beyond what is reasonable, with poor from other parts of the country, that we can explain the fact, that although the allowances here are even smaller than in most parts of the south of Scotland, the amount of the tax, on the non-privileged inhabitants of the Ancient Royalty, is as high as 3s. 3d. a-head on the population, while in some parts of London it is not higher than 4s.

It is to be observed, that, according to the present practice in England, a very large portion of the burden thus shewn to press on the large towns in Scotland, would be immediately removed and thrown on other parts of the country, so as to equalize the pressure among the inhabitants most materially. This would be done in two ways, *first*, by such provision for aged, disabled, and even for unemployed persons in their own parishes, as would lessen the influx, even of able-bodied poor, and altogether remove the inducement, now existing, for the continual influx into the towns of persons described in the above tables, as "past the prime of life," or "nearly disabled," before they come thither; and, *secondly*, by such impediments to the acquisition of a right of settlement, as would throw back the burden of many, now qualifying themselves for legal relief in these towns by a few years' residence, on the country districts from whence they come. Is it not something like national prejudice, to reject the consideration of such improvements, on the general plea, that "it will not do to introduce English Poor Laws into Scotland?"

As the law stands at present, in England, settlement can only be acquired by marriage (in the case of women), by serving an apprenticeship, by occupying a tenement worth £10 a-year, and paying rent and poor-rates for a year, or by the purchase or inheriting of property. Those who have not acquired settlement in one or other of these ways, follow the settlement of their parents, and if that cannot be ascertained, have their settlement in the place of their birth. In the case of any person who has acquired no settlement in a parish where he becomes destitute, the officers of that parish, although *bound to give him due relief so long as he continues there*, have power to remove him to the place of his settlement by birth or parentage; and if he cannot be removed without injury, or if the authorities of his own parish (as often happens) consent to his remaining where he is, they are regularly reimbursed for all the assistance they give him.\* Thus the great towns are regularly relieved, to a great extent, of the burden which falls on them in Scotland; and it is thus only that we can explain the fact, stated by the Poor Law Commis-

\* This information I have from two of the assistant Poor Law Commissioners.

sioners in regard to London, and so very different from what is seen in Scotland, that there is much less difficulty in the management of the able-bodied poor there than in the country, in consequence of the *great demand for labour both for men and women* which exists in the metropolis; i. e. of the number of labourers there not being redundant. (Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for 1836, p. 10.)

Another proof of the extent to which the great towns in England are thus relieved is to be found in the fact, that the poor-rates in several of the London parishes (as appears from the table formerly given) are less than in most parts of the country of England.

I have already stated that this law of settlement in England is by no means unobjectionable, and that a settlement by industrial residence appears to be just and equitable, but this residence should certainly be for a longer time than three years; and the expense of relieving those who have not acquired it (whether they are removed or not), ought to fall on the place of their birth or parentage.

What has now been stated seems to me quite sufficient to prove, that while the law of settlement, and the provisions made for the poor in the smaller towns and country parishes of Scotland remain as they are, the great towns *cannot* permanently relieve themselves of the destitution and disease which now oppress them, by any addition to their voluntary charities; and that if we intend, as Mr Monypenny recommends, to "alleviate the existing distress, and prevent, as far as possible, the recurrence of it," we must begin by making the system for relief of the poor *throughout the country* more uniform, more liberal, and more just.

I proceed now to consider the objections which this author has stated to the suggestions which I have made with these intentions. And, *first*, I have to notice the objection, on which he lays great stress, that any such alteration in the law or practice of Scotland would be inconsistent with the "proceedings of Parliament on the subject in 1834," in which the Scotch system was held up as a model for imitation in England. This objection may be easily conceived to have more weight with a lawyer than with a man of science, who will not so readily concede, that the proceedings of Parliament, in that or any other year, were necessarily guided by "pure and tried reason." But it is right to give my opponents the full benefit of an argument which several of them have brought forward, and which, at first sight, appears a strong one.

It is quite true, that, in the Report of the English Commissioners in 1817, and in the discussions in Parliament in 1834, much praise was bestowed on the practice in Scotland, and that

Lord Brougham stated it to be the main object of the Bill of 1834, for the amendment of the English Poor's Law, to "bring things nearer to their position in some parishes where salutary improvements had been effected," and that he added (incidentally, and as I think inadvertently), "*and to their state generally in Scotland.*" And it is also true that Mr Tufnell, an Assistant Commissioner, who visited Scotland in 1833, gave high praise to the system then adopted in St John's parish in Glasgow, and expressed himself strongly as to the "baneful influence of assessments on the morals and numbers of the poor."

But Mr Monypenny does not advert to this fact, that the opinion, both of the Select Committee in 1817, and of Lord Brougham in 1834, in favour of the Scottish system, is expressly grounded on the assumption, that *all Poor-Laws*, by reason of their supposed effect on population, are *impolitic and injurious*. The Report of the Committee lays it down as a first principle, that "a compulsory contribution for the indigent, from the funds originally accumulated from the labours and industry of others, could not fail, in process of time, *with the increase of population which it was calculated to foster*, to produce the unfortunate effect of abating these exertions, on the part of the labouring classes, on which, according to the nature of things, the happiness and welfare of mankind has been made to rest." (Proposed Alteration, &c., p. 32.) And I have already quoted stronger expressions from Lord Brougham's speech, to the same effect.

Now, if that assumption as to the effect of Poor-Laws on population is taken for granted, the Scotch system of provision for the poor must undoubtedly be better than the English, simply because it is a nearer approach to making no provision for them at all. Nor is it difficult, as I formerly stated, to perceive that those who maintain that principle, must, in consistency, object to all descriptions of charity, and believe, like Lord Kames, that the known death of some persons by starvation, is no public injury, "or rather it is an advantage;" and those who attempt to prevent it, even by voluntary charity, are "tender-hearted persons, more eminent for pity than principle." But that principle is not adopted,—at least it is "admitted not to have been made out to a precise and definite extent," by Mr Monypenny; and I have repeatedly stated that the very foundation of my argument is, the asserted, and, as I think, the proved *fallacy* of that opinion; and, of course, I maintain, that the practical inference which was drawn, either in the Report or the Speech, must necessarily fall with the principle on which it was avowedly rested.\*

\* On the statement of Mr Tufnell, as to the system in force in Scotland, I shall make some observations afterwards. It was certainly no part of the foundation of the bill of 1834.

But Mr Monypenny asserts, not only that these sentiments as to the superiority of the Scotch system, were avowed on those occasions, but that they were made the foundation of the practical measure that was adopted; that the purpose was “explicitly declared, of gradually approximating the English administration of the Poor Laws to the institutions of Scotland;” that the English law is gradually to be “administered in the same spirit as the Scotch;” and farther, that my notion of the English system being preferable to the Scotch, “is pointedly contradicted by the opinions of the English themselves, and of the Legislature;” that what I consider a prejudice and delusion of Scotchmen, in favour of their own system, “has become the firm conviction of Englishmen;” that “we have been already informed, in the most authentic manner, what Parliament would think of an alteration of the Poor Laws of Scotland—that question having been already decided by the highest competent tribunal, as recently as in the year 1834—so that no change of circumstances can plausibly even be alleged.” (P. 18 to 21.)

In these different assertions, I apprehend he is very much mistaken.

1. The Poor Law Amendment Act was not founded, either on the report of the Select Committee in 1817, or on the speeches of Lord Brougham in 1834, or on any merely speculative opinion, but on a much more extensive and more practical basis, viz. on “the Report of his Majesty’s Commissioners for enquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws,” published in 1834. Now this report certainly, as is well stated in the Quarterly Review (vol. 52. p. 233), holds up in the strongest light every abuse in the administration of the old Poor Law, and says nothing of the benefits which the country had derived from it; but it expressly declares the opinion of the Commissioners, that “a legal provision for the destitute, *including the able-bodied*, may be beneficially afforded, and that without it it is impossible to prevent mendicancy, vagrancy, and degradation.” The words of the report are, “from the evidence collected under this commission we are inclined to believe, that a *compulsory* provision for the relief of the *indigent* can be generally administered on a sound and well-defined principle, and that under the operation of this principle, the assurance that no one must perish from want may be made more complete than at present, and the mendicant and vagrant repressed by disarming them of their weapon,—the plea of impending starvation.” (Report, p. 227).

The immediate object of the law of 1834, it is well known, was to place the administration of the Poor Laws in England and Wales under the control of a central authority, the Poor Law Commissioners, who act by their assistant Commissioners in all

parts of England and Wales; and the principles guiding these Commissioners have been, not the speculative view of assimilating the English practice to that of Scotland, but the practical and strictly reasonable objects of *first* eradicating the great abuse of out-door relief to able-bodied people, without an adequate test of their destitution; and *secondly*, introducing such improvements in the administration of the law as *experience* might shew to be effectual in diminishing the burden on the rate-payers, *without injury to the indigent poor*. It is well known, that for the attainment of both of these objects, the chief reliance of the Commissioners has been on the extension and improvement of the Workhouse system,—a system which has been only very partially introduced into Scotland, and which Mr Monypenny expressly condemns. I am assured, on unquestionable authority (that of Dr Kay, one of the assistant Commissioners), that “no intention whatever existed to assimilate the English administration of the law for the relief the poor, to that prevalent in Scotland.”\*

2. Accordingly, when we attend to the representations given of the *practice* under the Poor-Law Amendment Act, by those who have most strongly supported it, we find no approximation to the Scotch system, in those particulars in which I have represented its practical operation as faulty and injurious, viz. in the “smallness of the allowances to the infirm or impotent poor, and the denial of a right of relief to the able-bodied.” Attend, for example, to the statement of Lord Brougham on these points. “Able-bodied workmen, I admit, are refused *out-door* relief, but they are *offered the relief of the workhouse*, if they choose to enter it.” —“If persons be infirm, be it from disease or natural malformation, from incapacity, bodily or mental, or from the advance of years, they receive, under this act, out-door relief; *aye, and receive it more certainly and liberally than if the act had not passed*. So great has been the desire of the Commissioners and of the Board of Guardians not to hold too tight the power of refusing out-door relief, that, when an *able-bodied man*, in the prime of life, but burdened with two or three children labouring under some natural infirmity, has applied, the Commissioners have granted to such persons, although neither infirm, nor diseased, nor aged, *out-door relief*, in consideration of the infirmities of their fami-

\* “The suggestions of the Commissioners,” Dr Kay adds, “were chiefly based on the effects of administering relief by well-regulated workhouses, which the inquiry discovered in certain parts of England, particularly Bingham, Southwell, and Cookham.” It thus appears, that Lord Brougham’s statement of the intention “to bring matters nearer to their position in some parishes where salutary improvements had been effected,” was strictly correct; but that when he added, “and to their state generally in Scotland,” he must have alluded only to the general resemblance of smaller expenditure.

lies.”—(Speech on the Poor Laws, March 20. 1838, in Lord Brougham’s Speeches, vol. iii. p. 548.) Mr Monypenny must surely admit, that in this there is no approximation of the English practice, to the spirit in which the Scotch poor-law is administered.

In fact, if we attend to the statements in all the reports of the Commissioners, we shall find, that the great abuse which they have been appointed to correct, and on the correction of which they rest their chief claims to be regarded as public benefactors, is that of *out-door relief to the able-bodied*, interfering with the natural circulation, and the just remuneration of labour; and that there has been no intention, either of imitating the “smallness of the allowances” granted to the aged or impotent poor, or of cutting off even the able-bodied from all right to relief.

Thus, in the Annual Report of the Commissioners for 1836, it is stated, “the general effect of our rules and regulations is, to supply the inmates of a workhouse with wholesome food, and sufficient clothing, a better bed than they are used to lie upon, a cleaner and a better ventilated room than they are used to inhabit, an immediate supply of medical attendance in case of illness, and to establish a degree of order and cleanliness unknown in a labourer’s cottage.” This kind of relief, it is to be observed, the able-bodied poor, when destitute from want of employment, *have a right to claim*.

“The guardians, relieving officers, and medical officers, are active, watchful, and efficient; and, in addition to these (which may be partly considered as newly created powers), the powers of the magistrates and overseers of the poor, as to all cases of sudden and real emergency, remain in operation as heretofore.”

In “Mr Stevens’ Report on Berks, Oxon, and Gloucester,” he says, (Report 1830, page 276)—

“Whilst the good effects above enumerated have been produced by what has appeared to some a severe system of administering relief, it is very important to observe, that the aged and really destitute are *always as well* and often better provided for than before.”

Colonel A’Court’s Report on Wilts, enters into more details on this point:—

“*As to old and impotent persons.*—Having ascertained that an applicant is old, unable to work, of good character, and a fitting object of charity, we drive no bargain by the threat of the workhouse; nor do we insist on food relief out of the house; we rather consult the feeling of the applicant, and make him grateful by giving him relief in money; to an old man or woman 2s. 6d. a-week; to an old man and his wife 4s. 6d. In cases where these

old persons have relatives able to maintain them, we refuse money relief, and offer the workhouse, in the hope of shaming such relatives into proper feelings of humanity and kindness."

"*As to Widows with young families.*—We act on similar principles towards widows with young families, on the ground that their misfortune is brought on them by no fault of their own, and that there would be no good policy in driving them and their children into a workhouse. A pauper, on entering a workhouse, should have a sense of degradation about him. The loss of a husband should not subject a poor woman to that mortification."

Also in Mr Mott's Report on Middlesex and Surrey, it is stated, p. 333,—

"It is satisfactory to know that the aged, infirm, and really necessitous and deserving poor under the new law are better provided for, and that attention to their wants is secured to them with a degree of comfort and a permanency which the old mal-administration failed of obtaining for them."

In Mr Earl's Report on Northampton and Warwick, he says, p. 416,—

"Among the inquiries I made of the Guardians, was the following:—

What is the Board's opinion of the effect of the new system upon the condition of the aged and infirm paupers who continue to be relieved out of the house?

From five unions the answer simply implied, that no change, one way or the other, could have been experienced by the aged and infirm; but from seven the reply is in effect, that their condition is improved, and their satisfaction greater, under the new system than the old.

Again, at page 421, he states, "In order to ascertain what proportion of this great reduction was sustained by the aged and infirm paupers, I have carefully examined the overseers' accounts of 13 parishes of various extent, chosen indifferently from those of the Brixworth Union, the allowances being estimated on the largest article of consumption by the poor; the paupers of this class in every case, not excepting that from which 1s. had been taken away (of which I may observe that I have found in this class but one example), were actually receiving more from the Board of Guardians than from the Parochial Authorities under the old law in 1832."

I am quite aware, and have mentioned in my former paper, that the English Poor-Law Commissioners contemplate the ultimate extinction of out-door relief, and look forward to the time when all the assistance given to the poor shall be confined to the workhouses, and when the amount required, even of that assistance, shall be very much reduced. I have already said, that

from any thing I have seen or learnt of the condition or habits of the poor in this or other countries, I consider these anticipations as much too sanguine, if not altogether Utopian; but no one can doubt that the workhouses have been most signally improved of late years in England, or can object to the simple and practical design which is stated by Dr Kay, "to apply the workhouse as the means of relief, to such an extent *as experience shall prove to be wise and useful*." I believe it never can be wise or useful, to break down those habits of comfort and cleanliness, and those artificial wants, which at present characterise the great body of the labouring poor, and even of the aged and disabled poor in England, or to outrage the feelings of family affection; and in so far as the relief of destitution can be entrusted to workhouses, without infringing on these precious qualities of the lower orders, the system must be generally approved. In the mean time, however, it is to be observed, "that *four-fifths* of the relief given in England under the Poor-Law administration in 1839 were *out-door relief*," and about seven-eighths of those receiving it were out-door poor (Report for 1839, p. 13); and it may be inferred from the tenor of all the reports of the Commissioners, that there is no intention of curtailing this, except in so far as experience may shew that it may be done, without materially diminishing the comforts, or *lowering the habits*, of the poor.

I admit it, therefore, to be true, as stated by Mr Monypenny, that the English system is, to a certain degree, in a state of transition; as every institution, undergoing improvement, and not professing to be perfect, must necessarily be. But when it is inferred from this, that that system cannot be regarded as superior to ours, or be held out as worthy of imitation, I answer, that as regards those principles in which I have represented the practice in England to be better than with us—the granting a right of relief to the able-bodied, and the securing, *in one way or other*, not only a bare and precarious existence, but a certain amount of comfort to the aged, disabled, and impotent poor,—*there has been no change*, and from what I have often seen of the humane feeling which is fostered among our neighbours, as I believe by the universal admission of the right of poverty to relief, I am confident that there will be no change, in the practice of the English people.

3. I cannot, therefore, think that Mr Monypenny is right in supposing that the minds of English legislators are so completely made up, as to the superiority of our Scotch system of managing the poor over the English, as to foreclose any question that may be raised in regard to improvement in the law or practice of Scotland. Nor is it a correct statement of the fact to assert,



that no change has occurred since 1834 to justify any change in the opinions which were entertained by Parliament at that time, even if those opinions had been so decidedly favourable to the Scotch system as Mr Monypenny supposes. Since 1834, the different Commissioners, who examined the condition of *Ireland*, have made their reports, and of the effect which the facts there disclosed have had on the minds of those who carefully studied them, we may judge from a sentence which I formerly quoted from Mr Revans, who was Secretary both to the English and Irish Commission. "The late inquiry in Ireland has shewn us the evils which the Poor Laws in England have *remedied*, compared with which those of the late mal-administration *shrink into insignificance*;" or from the expression of Mr Mott, one of the Assistant-Commissioners, "No person, I think, can read the heart-rending accounts of the distress of the labouring poor in Ireland, *without becoming a convert to the necessity of some compulsory provision* being made for the destitute poor."—(Report by Commissioners for 1836, p. 338.) And I confidently anticipate, that the result of the inquiry which has been now set on foot in Scotland will be to furnish another means of abating the "firm conviction" which Mr Monypenny supposes Englishmen to entertain of the superiority of the Scotch system. It is only necessary to have a fair and impartial examination of the *condition* of the suffering poor under the one system and the other, and "by their fruits ye shall know them."

4. But whatever may be the opinion, at the present moment, of the Houses of Parliament, I can confidently assert, that there is no such conviction of the superiority of the Scotch system of management of the poor, among the well informed portion of the English people, as Mr Monypenny supposes.

The fact is, that the practical operation of the Scotch system is very little known in Scotland itself; the general prevalence of the notion, that "the more you do for the poor, the more poor you will have," having disposed most men of intelligence to shut their eyes to the subject altogether, and trust to the general diffusion of that weighty maxim, as the true means of keeping down not only pauperism but poverty; of the success of which expedient the "long-continued, great, and appalling distress" allowed to exist in the great towns in Scotland, and equally certain as to many of the small towns, Highlands, and Islands, is the best evidence.

If not well known in Scotland, it cannot be supposed that the results of the system here pursued can be so far understood in England, as to make any well founded "firm conviction" of its superiority general in that country. Indeed, I have received from different parts of England accounts of the "astonishment and

abhorrence" with which the statements in my former paper of the condition of the lowest of the people in Edinburgh and Glasgow have been there received. But independently of such information, I am confident that the general opinion of the intelligent part of the community in England is in favour of a uniform legal provision for the poor, including the unemployed able-bodied; and of that provision securing to the aged and disabled poor, and to widows and orphans, *not only a bare subsistence, but some degree of comfort*. In proof of this, I might refer to such writings as those of the late Rev. Mr Davidson of Oriel College, Oxford, of Mr Weyland of Norfolk, and Mr Page of Sussex, but I would refer especially to numerous recent articles in the *Quarterly Review*, some of which I understand to state the opinions of a distinguished member of Parliament on the subject; and the general purport of which is to approve, generally, the Poor Law Amendment Act, as regards the management of the able-bodied poor, but to defend against all objections the principle of legal and liberal provision; and to urge in its favour very nearly the same arguments that I have used, although with less illustration than I think they might have received.

For example, "one great benefit which the poor law has conferred upon this country is, that it has established a fixed standard of adequate maintenance, and declared that no one should be forced below that level by any circumstances. The result of affording an elevated base like this to start from, is, that all have struggled by industry, exertion, and economy, to rise above it, and in the struggle nineteen out of twenty have succeeded. In Ireland, on the contrary, the extortion and oppression to which, without such a safeguard, the lower classes are necessarily subject, from those who alone possess the soil of the country, that is, the natural means of maintenance, have ground them down to the very lowest depths of poverty, to a state of hopeless, irremediable misery, which destroys their energies, forbids their exertions, and renders them reckless of consequences, from the impossibility of being under any circumstances worse off than they are.

'Qui procumbit humi, non habet unde cadat.'\*

"No fact is more universally admitted throughout this inquiry (in Ireland) than that which we have so often urged in opposition to the Malthuses and Martineaus, "namely, that early marriages are caused by extreme misery. The *uniform* answer to the query of the Commissioners was, that those who are most wretched marry soonest; as 'knowing they cannot be worse off than they are.' Indeed no economical fallacy was ever more completely opposed to fact, as well as reasoning, than that which induced so humane

a man as the late Mr Malthus to preach the revolting doctrine that the poor should be left to starve, lest they should propagate their numbers too rapidly. Ireland incontestibly demonstrates that it is when they are on the verge of starvation that they multiply the fastest.”—*Quarterly Review*, vol. 52.

“Those who will take the trouble to study more carefully even this *selection* of observations, will unavoidably be induced to draw for themselves that great and important distinction which we have lost no opportunity for years past of urging as the main point to be kept in view in the consideration of this subject—the distinction, namely, between the use and the abuse of the Poor Law, between the letter, spirit, and early practice of the law, and its recent indefensible infraction,—between the law itself, and the faults of its administration,—between the Poor Law of Elizabeth as acted upon through the whole of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the Poor Law of the Justices of the South of England as acted on by them *during the last thirty years only*.”—*Quarterly Review*, vol. 50. p. 351.

“The truth is, that the poor have a decided claim, in justice, to a support from off the land on which Providence has placed them, if that land is capable of affording it to their exertions. Such a provision, therefore, instead of being a matter of charity and benevolence, “a thing of love, not law,” is but the legal concession of a right antecedent even to that of the owners of the soil, a divine right, a right based on the eternal and immutable principles of intuitive justice; and its necessity may be equally proved on less high grounds. The only mode of preserving the peace of society is to afford to every one suffering the extremity of want, some resource short of plunder and violence. The expediency of a Poor Law as a mere measure of preventive police, may be easily demonstrated. It is, in truth, called for as imperatively by policy as by humanity, and by *justice* still more clearly than by either.”—*Quarterly Review*, vol. 48. p. 66.

In illustration of the general opinion in England, I may refer also to the general tenor of the allusions to the Poor Laws, contained in the speeches of candidates for the representation of the Towns and Counties, who are necessarily obliged to inform themselves of the general feelings of their constituents on such topics; and by whom any intention of supporting such enactments as would diminish the comforts now granted to the destitute poor, will be found to be very generally disclaimed.\*

But I would wish to refer more particularly to the opinions of *medical men*, as the most intelligent and impartial witnesses of the actual condition of the poor in this and other countries, that can be found. I have already given the clear and decided testi-

\* See *e. g.* the speech of Sir George Murray at Manchester in 1839.

mony of one such witness, who has had peculiar opportunities of observation.

The following extract from a letter from Mr Robertson of Manchester, who is well known by his elaborate and important inquiries into the vital statistics of large towns, particularly as to the mortality of children, contains not only the observations of a most competent witness on the practical working of the two systems, but likewise what I believe to be a very fair statement of the general way of thinking among intelligent Englishmen of the middle and higher ranks of society on this subject :

“Originally from Scotland, having also when a student of medicine attended the poor belonging to the Glasgow Town’s Hospital, and having, since that period, resided 22 years in Lancashire, I think myself fitted, as far as a private and obscure individual may venture an opinion, to answer your query, viz. : ‘Do you believe that the Scotch system of the management of the poor is better than that enforced in England, and that the English system ought gradually to be assimilated to the Scotch?’ and this I do, unhesitatingly, in the *negative*. On my first coming into England, I settled in a country town, and practised physic among the poor both in town and in the surrounding country ; and nothing, amongst much that was novel, struck me so forcibly, as the superiority, in cleanliness and comfort, of the English cottagers, as compared with the same class in my native land. In respect of the appearance of comfort, there cannot, generally speaking, be a comparison, so decided is the superiority. In the country, and even in the smaller towns and villages, it is rare for cottagers to sleep in the apartments they live in during the day, but above stairs. The floors, of brick or tiles, are kept scrupulously clean ; and every article of furniture, how homely and mean soever, is bright and shining.” “Personal cleanliness in the poor, is equally remarkable ; observable in the dress as well as the person : and not in the articles only which are outward and visible to the eye, but in the inner garments also. This, with the opportunities of observation arising from my profession, I am able to speak to. Yet, amongst such as *these*, many were receiving poor’s relief in one form or other ; perhaps the winter’s stock of coals, the cottage rent, or a weekly allowance of money.”\*

“I well remember the time when your benevolent and illustrious townsman, Dr Chalmers, itinerated in England with the view of propagating his opinions against the Poor Laws,—and the *sur-*

\* This will be immediately signalized as a gross abuse, and in many cases it may have been so ; but the general principle, that a legal provision for the poor should have the effect of securing, not merely a bare subsistence, but a certain degree of comfort, and the feeling of certain *artificial wants*, is that on which I believe that its *permanent* and national good effect depends.

*prise and disapprobation* with which his expositions were then generally received, by numbers, too, who admired the divine and the philanthropist, and thronged to hear him preach.

“Malthus’s work on population has unquestionably had an unfortunate effect on the public mind in this country ; and this kind of effect it need not have had, would the eminent writer have but confined himself to his *principle* of population, and refrained from denouncing, in such unmeasured terms, the poor’s law and our charitable establishments ; or, in other words, would he have simply expounded his *principle*, without so hastily seeking to apply it as a means of overthrowing an immensely important class of our social institutions. The consequences, however, unhappily have been, that, while the political economists have adopted the theory of Malthus, with all his applications of it, *the great body of the wealthy classes reject that theory* in toto, what is true of it, equally with what is hasty and false. *Numbers of, in other respects, enlightened people*, refuse not only to allow that the Malthusian principle of population is incontrovertible (for such I take it to be, since it is based on human nature, as exhibited in every state of society), but they stigmatise the name of Malthus as that of the originator of a political heresy, at once *unmerciful, anti-social, and untrue*. The economists, on the other hand, owing to the clamour they are assailed with for being Malthusians, are driven practically to adhere, like all the persecuted, to the whole of their master’s opinions ; and thus, instead of guiding the general mind, which might fairly be expected of so many able and benevolent men, *they are despised, distrusted, and nearly every where opposed*. I was sensibly relieved, in reading your pamphlet on the Scottish poor, to find that you admit and appreciate the correctness of the views of Malthus as to the tendency of population to outstrip the means of subsistence, while, at the same time, you deny his practical application of them ; and I think you triumphantly prove your point, that our Poor Law has not *strengthened* that tendency, but rather materially diminished it, when compared with the activity we see it exhibit in Ireland, and in all other European countries destitute of effective Poor Laws.” “The account in your pamphlet of the poor in Edinburgh has excited in my mind, and in the minds of all my acquaintances who read it, feelings first of astonishment, and then of abhorrence and disgust.” In Manchester, we have want and misery, it is true, in many forms ; but any thing like the starvation, the gradual wasting down of unoffending human beings, until fever or other mortal disease comes to give the *coup de grace*, must be *very rare amongst us*. It is disgraceful to a civilized community, and is probably no where, in any great extent, to be found out of the Scottish towns, except in wretched Ireland.”

I remember being forcibly struck, some years ago, with the observations made on the practical operation of the English Poor Law by a Scotch gentleman, many years settled in Manchester, and a proprietor of one of the great manufactories. He said that he had originally imbibed the notions prevalent in Scotland as to the injurious effects of Poor Laws, but that his opinion had so completely changed, in consequence of observation and reflection on their practical operation, that he had no difficulty in pronouncing "the Poor Law to be the best law in England." He was, at the same time, perfectly aware of the abuse which had injured its practical administration. He had made inquiry in some of those parishes in which the great improvements had been made, which were afterwards taken as a model by the Poor-Law Commissioners, and made the basis of their practical changes; and foretold exactly what has since happened, that, if the great abuse of indiscriminate out-door relief, and payment of wages out of poor-rates, were abolished, and the law made applicable to those only for whose benefit it was originally designed, the proportion of paupers to the population would be found *not to have increased during the last two centuries.*

Of the general opinion of those medical men who have made comparative observations and reflected on this subject, as to the general question of a fixed, legal, and liberal provision for the poor, we have, I believe, a very fair exponent in the leading articles of the Medical Gazette, a journal which all my medical readers will know to be patronized and supported by a large proportion of the most respectable medical practitioners both in London and in the provincial towns of England. In the notices of my pamphlet in that journal, the following passages occur:—"There is a class of persons 'who believe practically that the poor and luckless are here only as a nuisance, to be abraded and abated, and in some permissible manner made away with, and swept out of sight.' But the benevolent, however grieved by the picture drawn by Dr Alison, will not only allow that it is correct, but that it demands a speedy and substantial alteration." "The large and increasing numbers of contagious fever, to the medical reader, scarcely require a comment; they speak of a state of destitution otherwise beyond belief, and afford a dreadful example of the workings of the *Laissez faire* system." "We may learn from it to prize with still warmer esteem the 43d of Elizabeth." "Scotland holds a middle place between Ireland and England; the neglect of the poor is great, and the ravages of fever in Edinburgh and Glasgow are frightful. The latter city, indeed, almost rises to the bad eminence of an Irish town, for, two years ago, the proportion of inhabitants attacked with fever was nearly one in ten. England, with what some re-

gard as the *plais devorante* of the Poor Laws, eating us out of house and home, has a very different account to shew." "*As the botanist can tell the quality of the soil from the flowers that spontaneously arise upon it, the physician knows the state of a people from the epidemics that mow it down.*"

Again, "the Scotch economists object to the poor's rate in England, not only as it was distributed before the late act, after a lenient and sometimes careless fashion, but as now doled out with the most pinching frugality. The sums given for the relief of misery *there*, would here seem a mere mockery." "Dr Alison remarks, that some of the advocates of the new Poor Law held out the prospect that it would make the poor so prudent, that they would learn to adapt their number to the demand for their services, and ultimately require no assistance except in sickness; but we think he deals too gently with this nonsense when he calls these prospects quite Utopian and visionary; though he is perfectly right when he adds, that any attempt to reduce them to practice, while human nature continues as it is, will be found to tend only to misery and disorder." (See Medical Gazette, Feb. 1840.)

Now I am aware it will be asked, if the well-informed and intelligent members of the community in England are generally so satisfied of the wisdom and justice of their legal provision for the poor, whence arose all the clamour which we have heard against the English Poor Laws,—the *plais devorante* of the country, on which our friends in France have bestowed so many lamentations, and which, some years ago, had nearly frightened Englishmen from their propriety.

In answer to this question, it might almost be thought enough to say, that it is the custom and the privilege of Englishmen to make an outcry on many occasions, altogether disproportioned to the real injury they have received, and this particularly on occasion of any proposed increase or remission of taxation; but it is necessary to examine this matter a little more closely, because a plausible argument has been drawn from the clamour which has, at different times, been raised about Poor Rates in England,—against all allusion to the English practice in any discussions on this subject in Scotland,—and we might thus be deprived of the inestimable advantage of a very extensive experience in correcting our own institutions.

I think it necessary to observe, therefore, that there have been three distinct sets of objections, urged within the last forty years, to the practice under the English Poor Laws, and that a very little consideration will shew, that none of them are truly applicable to that approximation to the English system, which I have taken upon me to recommend in Scotland.

The first is the general objection, made by the economists, and

supported by a certain number, but never a large number of speculative men, to all Poor Laws without exception, on the score of their supposed effect on population; an objection which, as I formerly said, if it proves any thing, proves a great deal too much,—tolerates voluntary charity only inasmuch as it does less for the poor than assessments, and looks forward to the discontinuance of all assistance to the indigent poor, and leaving them to the consequences of their own imprudence or that of their parents,—as the true panacea for all the evils of poverty. To this argument I formerly addressed myself, and as it is not formally maintained by any of those who condemn my allusions to the English system, I do not think it necessary to dwell on it again.

The second *was* the perfectly well founded and practical objection, often and justly urged against that part of the practice under the old English Poor Law,—the indiscriminate relief to the able-bodied,—which the Poor-Law Amendment Act was designed to correct, and *has corrected*; for I believe it to be certain that, with some exceptions in the manufacturing districts, in which another “test of destitution” may perhaps be found necessary, the workhouse system (whatever may be thought of its ulterior applications) has been found perfectly effectual in checking that abuse, *without denying the right of relief to the able-bodied poor.*

The third class of objections which has been urged, of late years, to the *present* administration of the Poor Laws in England, is one which tells entirely and strongly in my favour. It is the strong objection which has been raised by the *rate-payers* in England (and, I will add, to their immortal honour as men of Christian and benevolent feeling) against the practice under the Poor-Law Amendment Act, not because it was doing too little for *them*, but because it was doing *too much for them, and too little for the poor*;—because it was thought to be relieving the rate-payers too much, and “depriving the poor of comforts to which they were justly entitled.” Such an objection, I verily believe, could only have arisen in a country, the inhabitants of which had been habituated to *charity by law*—accustomed to see the relief of human suffering regularly and uniformly enforced, as a right of the poor, and a duty of the rich—and to feel themselves disgraced and offended if suffering, unattended with crime, were to increase and multiply among them. The very existence of this objection must be allowed to shew, that the *plaie devorante*, even when at its worst, had no such malignity as has been so zealously ascribed to it; and that the burden to which the English people submit for the sake of their poor,—although just five times as great, in proportion to the population, as that which the Scotch legal poor’s fund, *including voluntary collections*, imposes,—neither oppresses their energies, nor stifles their feelings of benevolence.



Much of this objection is probably founded in error or misconception, but at present we are only concerned with its existence, extent, and intensity ; and on these points, any one who examines the columns of the Times, of the Morning Herald, or (what is better authority) of the London Medical Gazette, for three years past, may see sufficient evidence.

I think I need say no more as to the alleged "firm conviction" of Englishmen, that the Scotch system of management of the poor is superior to theirs, and their supposed wish to see "the administration of the law in England gradually assimilated to that in Scotland." Indeed, if the subject were to come before the Legislature, it seems to me obvious that many men, particularly of the Conservative party in England, who have exerted themselves to prevent the Poor-Law Amendment Act from pressing too hard on the poor in England, would place themselves in a false position, if they were to oppose the attempt to remedy the "very great and appalling evils" known to exist in Scotland, by giving additional extension and certainty to the legal provision existing here.

But I cannot help, in concluding this part of the subject, putting one question. If the opponents of the extension of the legal provision in Scotland, are so satisfied that the English practice "is gradually to be assimilated to the Scotch," whence arises the extraordinary jealousy which they have shewn, of allowing an inquiry into the state of pauperism in Scotland, to be assisted by the English Poor-Law Commissioners? Does it not imply in them some lurking distrust of the superior excellence of the Scottish system, to manifest such unwillingness to submit it to the inspection of men who, as they assert, are not only convinced of its superiority, but are preparing to imitate it?

Having dwelt so long on these preliminary, but, as I think, essential considerations, I need not enlarge on the objections which have been stated in detail to my suggestions.

I. And *first*, as to the wisdom of the plan most generally followed in Scotland for raising the funds—"voluntary contribution, rather than assessment"—we have a long array of evidence, from what is stated as "the highest authority," that of the Lord Chancellor Brougham, down to the kirk-sessions of many parishes, to prove that "it has invariably been held in Scotland, that assessment was not to be applied as the uniform system in all cases, but only that it might be resorted to, either temporarily, or as a measure to be renewed from time to time, in any particular parish, in which the accustomed means of maintaining the poor by voluntary contributions had proved inadequate," although "it is now seriously (may we not add, rashly) proposed by Scotsmen

to obliterate this remarkable feature of our institutions, and to substitute for it a uniform assessment.”—(P. 22-34.)

This appeal to the “wisdom of our ancestors” was not necessary in order to establish, that the general opinion, both of clerical and legal authorities in Scotland, (although not without some remarkable exceptions, such as that of Dr S. M’Gill and Dr A. Thomson, already mentioned) has been clearly against the expediency of assessments, otherwise than as a last resource, and, if possible, a temporary expedient. I am perfectly aware, as I formerly stated, that I have set myself in opposition to an opinion which has been maintained by many men of the highest character. I have already said, that I did not do so without repeated and deliberate consideration of the subject, and twenty-five years of habitual acquaintance with the habits and conduct of the lowest order of society, *i. e.* with the class of facts on which, as it seems to me, the decision of the question of expediency must chiefly rest. I may take the liberty of adding, that I did not do so without some little experience in other scientific inquiries, both in the observation of facts, and in the comparison and estimation of the evidence, by which opinions, deduced from those facts, are to be judged; nor without a thorough conviction, founded on that experience, that, in order to obtain any useful result from such investigations, we must attach ourselves to no party, bow to no authority, and care for no flights of oratory, but resolve simply and steadily to “follow Truth, and let Fame follow us if she pleases.”

Proceeding, as I hope, on this principle, I have stated in my former paper (p. 37 to 75), the arguments which I have known to be urged against assessments, and what seemed to me the proper answer to them; and I appeal to any one who has read and considered the statements there made, whether there is any thing in the chapter of Mr Monypenny’s pamphlet now in question, besides the array of authorities, *i. e.* any thing stated between pages 34 and 43 of his work, which had not been considered and answered in what I had previously written. The argument as to the effect of the legal provision on population not being urged, the chief stress is laid on its alleged effect on the character of the poor (the argument which I had considered from p. 62 to p. 69, as well as in other passages), and this especially as indicated in three ways: 1. by the gradually increasing number of paupers in assessed parishes; 2. by the diminution of offerings at church doors, where assessments are introduced; and 3. by the alleged “extinction of the duty of relatives to the poor with whom they are connected,” by this practice.

Now, when these reasons are fairly considered, and due attention paid to the facts already stated in answer to them, I really cannot suppose that they can be regarded as sufficient to arrest

an improvement which so many considerations, of justice, humanity, Christian principle, and true policy, tend to recommend. It is not denied, that the effect of an increased and uniform legal provision would be, an extensive relief of human suffering, and a more faithful fulfilment of the will of Heaven in regard to our unfortunate brethren; and it is not asserted that any increase of the *whole population*, and of its pressure on the means of subsistence, *i. e.* of poverty and destitution, would result from the benefits thus conferred on the poor; but it is apprehended, 1. that the *proportion* of the people dependent on charity would increase; 2. that their feeling of duty towards their relatives would diminish; and, 3. that the "little offerings" at the church doors, "from the wages and savings" of those who are below the rank of rate-payers, and are liable themselves to become paupers, would cease, and that they would learn "most mischievously and most erroneously" to believe that no obligation rests on them for the support of the poor, but that it is a legal burden incumbent only on the rich.

"One cannot make inquiries," it is added, "in any of the assessed districts, without being assured that these sentiments are entertained and extensively acted on. One cannot read a single number of the new Statistical Account of Scotland, without finding abundant proof of these melancholy truths." It is then said that the desertion of relatives by relatives is only known in the assessed districts of the country. "It is the compulsory assessment *which has introduced this vice*. Only let this measure be extended to all parts of the country, and the rates be augmented, and *the duty of relatives to the poor with whom they are connected is extinguished for ever*." (Proposed Alteration, &c. p. 41-43.)

I am quite aware that such representations of the evil effects of assessments have been made, and such anticipations formed, by well-meaning and benevolent men; and have often reflected upon them, and endeavoured to satisfy myself, by observation, how far they are correct; and have stated, in different parts of my former paper, facts which seem to me to demonstrate, that they are very erroneous, and that an ample legal provision, if administered with common prudence, and attention to the securities against misapplication which the experience of other countries suggests, has no such pernicious effect on the character and conduct of the lower ranks of society. Even if these views of the character of the poor were correct, it seems to me very doubtful, whether they would relieve the higher orders of the duty of a uniform and effective system of charity; but I think it easy to shew that they are founded on preconceived opinions and partial observations, and that the anticipations deduced from them have no foundation in experience, of such extent as to be a fit ground for the enactment or administration of laws.

To all such general views I would, in the first place, oppose the sentiments contained in the following passage from Dr M'Gill's Treatise, which seems to me to shew very distinctly, both how such ideas are formed, and how much they are at variance with more extended observations of the fact, and with the views and precepts of the Gospel.

He argues that the plan of avoiding any regular maintenance for the poor, proceeds on false views of their character, and of the labouring classes in general; that while high and generous motives are supposed to operate on the upper classes of society, "the only motive which stimulates the labouring orders to activity, is supposed to be the fear of want." This, he observes, is by no means the case; "the love of distinction, the hope of reward, the fear of shame, the sense of duty, the welfare of friends and neighbours, and relations, are seen daily stimulating men of the lowest condition to active exertions." He asks farther, are we to exclude from them the views, and the motives, and the feelings of Christians?" And he maintains, that in the cottage of the labouring man, "are to be seen as many examples of self-denial, kindness, sympathy, and active benevolence, as ever did honour to the annals of those who are justly held up to the admiration of their fellow-men."

He observes also, that evils which exist partially among the poor are often cruelly and unjustly imputed to them in general: that because *some* are idle, and profligate, and ungrateful, we are too apt to impute this to them *all*; and *when we have adopted the theory, that all regular provision for the poor encourages idleness and profligacy, we are led to search so much for proofs of this theory, and to dwell so much on every example which occurs, that we can scarcely see any other evil to be guarded against:* that our hearts are thus prone to become hardened against them, and to look with suspicion on every indulgence and comfort which a poor man enjoys with his family: that, "too fearful of deceit, every view of distress awakens the idea of imposture and crime; and that the consideration of the poor is like the examination of a criminal: that compassion is not only suspended, but often lost, in the intellectual process of investigating." He then observes, that "it is not under such views, that the Scriptures present the poor to our minds, nor is it according to such sentiments that they direct us to exercise our charity. They delight to represent the poor as equally virtuous with other men; nay, as the peculiar objects of the compassion and care of God. They dwell on their sorrow and afflictions; and they seek to preserve an interest in their favour, not only by direct pictures of their sufferings, but by those epithets and expressions of kindness and regard, which keep alive and cherish respect and compassion. They throw around the sufferer a sacredness, which even the remembrance of past

misconduct is not allowed to violate." "With what earnestness, what frequency, what powerful motives, suited to every principle of the soul, is the relief of the indigent and helpless recommended and enjoined? No difficulties, no dangers, are brought forward to damp the spirit and to check the exertions of charity. *They express no fear that men be too compassionate; no danger that the spirit of benevolence rise too high, or extend too widely.*" (Discourses and Essays, pp. 403, 404.)

In the next place, I shall shortly recapitulate (with some little additions) the facts formerly stated, in proof that no such injurious effects on the number or character of the poor are found, by experience, to result from an ample legal provision.

1. I think it appears distinctly, from facts stated at pp. 46, 102, and 107 of my former paper (2d edit.), and at pp. 5 and 22 of this Reply, that the idea of assessments necessarily engendering an increased number of poor, in proportion to the population, proceeds entirely on the fallacy of confounding pauperism with poverty, destitution, and dependence on charity. In point of fact, we have seen that, in Scotland, the paupers are *somewhat more numerous in the non-assessed*, than the assessed districts; but that I regard as of little importance. The main fact is, that in no part of Scotland, not even, as I believe, on the Border, do the paupers constitute more than *a part of the destitute and dependent poor*; therefore, in all parts of Scotland, there is abundance of room for the paupers to increase materially, *without the proportion of the population who are dependent on charity having increased at all*. Thus, we have seen, that in one parish, where the paupers are only 60 (because there are only L.3 a-year to be distributed among them), the destitute poor, who would be made paupers if there were funds, are at least 200; and that, in another, where there are 38 paupers, there are 200 destitute poor, absolutely dependent on charitable aid. And in Edinburgh itself (*i. e.* in the ancient royalty), while the paupers on the roll are below 3000, it is quite certain that the destitute poor, dependent on charity during great part of the year, are above three times that number.

Until, therefore, the number of paupers in Scotland comes to be a real expression of the number of destitute poor in Scotland, all calculations as to the increase of the paupers in assessed parishes are utterly useless in relation to the question, Whether the proportion of the population suffering want, and dependent on the rest, is increased by the extension of the legal provision?

This is perfectly well explained and illustrated in the Review of Dr M'Gill's work formerly mentioned, and attributed to the late Dr A. Thomson.

"Where there is a great increase of the numbers of the poor

(i. e. paupers), it ought to be inquired, before drawing any conclusion, whether it was the fact or not, that formerly there were many left to want or to beg, *who ought to have received parish assistance, and who are now only restored to that place on the poor's roll which they ought always to have possessed.* In like manner, where there is a great addition to the expense of maintaining the poor, it ought to be ascertained whether they have now too much, or had formerly too little? Our opinion is, that, in this country, the evil in former times consisted in giving the poor too little, and that there is very seldom, as yet, any error committed in giving them too much.

“ We may illustrate this by referring to the Barony parish of Glasgow. We are informed that, previous to the year 1810, there was no assessment, and that the poor of that parish were maintained at the expense of L.600 a-year. The population amounted to above 30,000, which, allowing  $2\frac{1}{2}$  paupers to every 100 inhabitants, ought to have placed 750 poor on the roll. Now, L.600 divided among 750 poor gives just about *a halfpenny a day to each.* The expense of maintaining the poor of the same parish in 1817, according to the Report transmitted to the General Assembly, was L.3436, divided among 1078 paupers, the population then amounting to nearly 46,000. This is an allowance of only about *twopence a-day* to each pauper at an average, which, great as the increase has been since 1810, is certainly as little as possibly can be given.\* When the increased expense of maintaining the poor in that parish is mentioned, may we not fairly ask, Whether did they formerly get too little, or do they now get too much? In former days, we believe that the poor were, for the most part, either thrown as a burden upon their poor friends, or sent to beg, and thus made a burden upon the country at large. Instead of grudging the increased expense of their maintenance, or being alarmed at it, every humane person should rather rejoice that the increased liberality of the age has done so much to ameliorate the condition of the poor.”

Again, “ it is readily acknowledged, that in general, whenever assessments take place, there is a considerable increase in the numbers of the paupers, and in the expense of their maintenance. But it will be found, that neither the number of the poor is really increased, nor the expense, but that the whole of the poor have now become visible, many of whom had formerly been

\* It appears, from the Report of the Committee of the General Assembly in 1839, that this pittance, which Dr Thomson considered as little as could possibly be given, has been since somewhat reduced. The numbers in that parish there given are,—population 88,000; paupers, 1767 (2.04 per cent.); sums distributed for their relief, L.5146 (after deduction of the payments for education of children): which gives an average daily allowance to each pauper of 1½d. (Report of Committee, p. 45.)

hid; and that they come wholly or chiefly on the assessment for their maintenance, instead of obtaining it in various other ways. In such a parish as the Barony parish already mentioned, where the poor received only about a halfpenny a-day each, a very great proportion of those who were in need would not think it worth their while to be at the trouble of applying for such a trifle. The time spent in seeking it, would be much more productive if employed in begging. Many would thus be driven to beg, many would become a burden on their friends, and some would probably suffer want. But when any thing like a suitable allowance was given, in consequence of an assessment, this would bring forward the whole body of those at least who had any good claims; but probably not all at once, but from year to year, till the whole had come forward. It ought not to be any cause of regret, that those of the poor who were starving in their houses, should come forward and apply for their share of an assessment; nor that those who were supported by the general funds of the country in the shape of begging, should be put on the fund of their own parish." (Christian Instructor, vol. xix, p. 804-5.)

The facts which really bear on this question as to the effects of assessment, are those formerly stated (p. 102), which shew, on so large a scale as to avoid many individual fallacies, that where a uniform compulsory provision for the poor exists, and such avowed or virtual concession of the right of relief as brings forward almost all who are really destitute, the number claiming and receiving such relief has never been found to exceed 10 per cent., and is often below 5; and that where no such regular provision for the destitute and dependent poor exists, their number, when fairly investigated, is found to have increased to 25 per cent. as in Ireland, or to 45 per cent. as in Venice,—nay, till it includes almost the whole labouring population, as in Brittany, and in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland; and the explanation of these facts is, as I conceive, given by the statements previously made (p. 42, to 57), which shew, that where the provisions for the relief of poverty are such as to maintain the feeling of artificial wants among the labouring poor, the proportion of marriages and births to the population is, as Malthus has admitted in England, very small; and again, that where there are no such provisions, and where many of the poor are habitually reduced to mendicity and degradation, "the poorest marry the soonest," and the progress of the population is morbidly rapid.

2. As to what is said of the probable extinction of the duty of relatives to one another among the poor, by such legal provision as shall give security against destitution, I think it sufficiently answered by what I have formerly stated (p. 68); but in order to put beyond doubt the incorrectness of the idea, that want and

misery are a cement of natural affection among relatives, I request attention to the following considerations.

If security against destitution naturally led to the extinction of domestic ties, and the desertion of relatives, we should find these sins to be much more frequently committed in all other ranks of society than in the lowest. Now I appeal to all medical men, who have more opportunities than any others of witnessing the strength of domestic affections, and often do witness and admire them in all ranks of society, whether we do not see them more certainly and more strongly evinced in those of the poor who are in regular employment, and in tolerable comfort, than in those (even of good character) who are incessantly struggling to obtain the first necessities of life. I have stated that instances of heartless indifference to parents and relatives, are very common among *the poorest* of the natives of Scotland, even although tolerably well educated and of regular habits; and this in situations where the poor rates afford hardly any resource. This is fully confirmed by the statement of Mr Chambers, that in the town which he so minutely examined, and where the legal provision is so very inefficient, it is "only in a few cases of the destitute poor described, (not above one-fifth of the whole) that the relatives of the parties afford any degree of succour." (See p. 12.) Indeed, I have been assured by several persons who have inquired into many cases of distress among the most destitute of the Scotch poor (what exactly agrees with my own observation) that nothing surprised them more than to find, how much was done for destitute persons or families by their neighbours, and how little by their own relatives. In like manner, I formerly quoted the Report of a Committee on the causes of the increased assessments in Glasgow, which states, that among the poorest of the operatives there, "idleness and improvidence cause every domestic tie to be disregarded. Aged parents are abandoned in their helplessness, and families left to endure the miseries of wretchedness and hunger."

The lower classes of the Irish have been celebrated, and in many instances I believe justly, for the strength of their domestic affections. But we find that among them extreme destitution has the same blighting effect on these virtues. The following quotation from the Quarterly Review gives us *facts*, which are extracted from the First Report of his Majesty's Commissioners in Ireland, published in 1835.

"The aged have usually been supported by their children, who give 'a corner, and a bit and sup.' 'If sickly, and in want of other food than potatoes, they may die,' for none other is to be had." "But the custom of supporting their parents, which used to be the pride of the Irish peasants, is *decaying fast from the*



*pressure of the times* and incapacity. Labourers supporting their parents are often reduced to one meal of dry potatoes a-day. It comes sometimes to counting the potatoes. Then as the second family grows large, the daughter-in-law begins to grumble; she will not see her children starved to feed her husband's parents." 'Being always at home,' says one witness, 'she is apt to find her husband's father in the way, and you will see the old man cowering in a corner of the chimney, as if he was endeavouring to hide himself from her.' (Report, p. 230.) Domestic quarrels arise, the old people's lives are embittered, and they are at length driven to beg."

"One witness asserts that the turning out of the aged father is now so common, that 'the contrary is the exception.' (Report, p. 198.) Let this statement of *facts* teach us the true value of the sentimental declamations against a poor law, as 'making children reckless of supporting their aged parents, and destroying every social virtue,' which some authors are so fond of repeating. The 'social virtues' are stifled in an atmosphere of misery; and selfishness—the instinct of self-preservation—overpowers every other feeling. When 'it comes to counting the potatoes,' it comes also to be a question with a man, whether he would prefer seeing his parents or his children perish before his eyes.' And is it to foster the 'social virtues' that we are to reduce our peasantry to the agonizing choice between such alternatives? Or do we not thereby rather unloose every social tie, and excite the out-burst of the most savage, desperate, and demoniac passions?" (Quarterly Review, vol. lv. p. 55.)

On the other hand, I quoted the general affirmation of Mr Revans, that "the moral statistics of England"—including, as he states, the performance of the duties of "parents, children, and friends," will bear a comparison with those of any other country in the world;" and it is easy to adduce farther evidence of the same fact. The following is the testimony of a man whose zeal against the new poor laws has led him into many absurdities, but whose opportunities of observation, and honesty in the statement, are, I believe, not denied.

"The poor," says Mr Oastler, "are most kind to one another." "As the almoner of public charities, I have been brought into contact with thousands of them of all grades, from the respectable artizan down to the imprisoned felon." "Their kindness to one another in their distresses is most exemplary and affecting. When pleading for a neighbour, they will indeed urge the absence of every claim upon themselves, and their inability to afford any assistance; but, after the aid they have been soliciting has either been obtained or denied, they will cheerfully divide their morsel, and perform voluntarily and gratuitously every service." (Quarterly Review.)

Mr Robertson of Manchester, whose opportunities of comparative observation were formerly mentioned, writes to me that he can answer the question as to whether the duty of the poor to their relatives is extinguished or greatly diminished by the security against destitution given by the poor laws, "distinctly and unhesitatingly in the negative;" and Dr De Vitre of Lancaster is more minute in his statements on this point.

"As far as my opinion goes, I am thoroughly satisfied that it is not by accumulated misery and poverty that the ties of natural affection are to be cemented, and I am equally satisfied that the poor laws of England are *perfectly guiltless* of having weakened the bond of union existing between parent and child. It is not at all unusual to find that a parent is removed from a poor-house so soon as his offspring are enabled to offer him an asylum under their own roof, and it still more frequently happens that children will undergo any deprivation, rather than allow their parents to be placed in a poor-house. Many parties here gladly accept the small weekly pittance in preference to having their parents removed to the workhouse,—no mean proof of natural affection."

I do not deny that the domestic affections are very strong among all ranks of people in Scotland, nay, I do not think we are in error in believing that they are *peculiarly* strong among us; but I am certain that we only deceive ourselves if we suppose, either that there is any peculiar deficiency in that respect among the English poor, or that any superiority that may exist among us, is owing to the absence of a legal security against destitution. If we are satisfied of its existence, let it be ascribed to its true cause, a superior religious and moral education; we may be assured that it is in that part of the population only who stand in no need of assistance from any kind of public provision for the poor, that its existence can be truly asserted.

I beg farther to remind the reader on this point, that in several of the foreign countries where an ample legal provision for the poor exists, the affection of relatives for each other among the lowest ranks has been particularly remarked; and I would refer particularly to the statement of Mr Nicholls in regard to Holland, that "few countries possess a population in which the domestic and social duties are discharged with such constancy."

Notwithstanding what has now been said, I do not doubt that the statement of the desertion of the poor by their relatives being *chiefly* observed in the assessed districts, is quite correct.\* But instead of inferring that the vice is the effect of the assessments,

\* That it is not *exclusively* in these, appears from the statement at p. 108 of Mr Monypenny's pamphlet, that during the time when the poor in St John's parish in Glasgow were supported without assessment, an expense of £702 was incurred for foundlings, illegitimates, and "children of runaway parents."

I believe the truth to be, that both have been the effects of the more complex state of society, the more precarious and unhealthy employments, and the more irregular and dissipated habits of the poor of these districts. And I formerly mentioned a fact which seems to me to have quite the value of the *instantia crucis* on this point, viz. that the desertion of parents by children, or of families by parents, as occurring in the assessed districts, is *most frequent among those who have no claim on the assessments*, among those families of strangers, both Scotch and Irish, who have acquired no settlement, and are therefore denied all claim to legal relief. I can state this most decidedly from my own observation, for I can truly say that I have had cases of this kind under my eye every week of my residence in Edinburgh for the last twenty-five years, and know many such at this moment. I find that the same observation has been made by many others who have had much intercourse with the poor in Edinburgh; and having had this ample experience of the fact, I must say, with all deference to Mr Monypenny, that it would be as easy to convince me that Tenterden steeple is the cause of the Goodwin sands, as that the compulsory assessment is the cause of the introduction of this vice among us.

The fact is, that the reliance of those who desert their families is in all cases almost entirely on voluntary charity, first of their neighbours, and afterwards of the higher ranks; and this resource, even if it were inadequate to their wants, is always liable to the numerous objections which I formerly stated, and some of which, at the risk of being tedious, I shall state again in the words of Dr Thomson and Dr M'Gill, only observing, that the truth of these statements is amply confirmed by what I have already stated as to the actual condition of the poor in many parts of Scotland.

“Imprudence, ignorance, idleness, extravagance, and profligacy, are frequent causes of pauperism (destitution); yet in many cases also, it is the result of the present state of human beings, and is the lot of multitudes, who cannot be charged with any peculiar degree of negligence or depravity; nay, of many who have been distinguished through life for the faithful discharge of their duties. Now, the question is, if for the relief of the poor thus necessarily existing in every country, some public provision should be made, or if they should be left entirely to individual compassion? In answer to this question, Dr M'Gill very properly observes, ‘that helpless children, diseased and aged fellow-citizens, are not to be left to perish with cold and hunger.’ But if they are left to private charity, in what way are their wants, particularly in large cities, to be known? The discovery of every poor person's case must be left to accident; or they must apply

to those who can give them relief; in other words, *they must beg*. There is, in fact, no other plan, but either to leave the poor in danger of starving, or allowing them to beg, or making legal provision for them. "Private charity," as Dr M'Gill well observes, "will be found a most inadequate and irregular source of supply, and often stopped and dried up at the season when it is most needed; but the aid afforded to the poor and afflicted requires to be regular and continued." If begging is allowed, "the impudent, the healthy, and undeserving may live in luxury, while the humble, the decent, the sick, the diseased, the aged sufferers, may be left to perish." "The allotment, also, on this plan must be most unequal. The least deserving, and the least necessitous, will be the most forward to make known their wants; and the portion which should have been allotted to some humble sufferer is swallowed up by the more forward and artful."

"The author hence argues the necessity of a legal provision. He adverts to the measures which may be formed by private individuals and particular communities respecting the poor; but remarks that these will be found in general inadequate, and no means can be fallen upon to raise them to meet the exigency.

"Collections made at churches will also be found frequently inadequate, even with all the advantages of a resident and faithful minister, and pious and careful superintendents. There is also this disadvantage attending them, that those who do not attend the church, among whom are frequently the wealthy, entirely escape. Under this deficiency of necessary funds, the poor must either starve or beg, or there must be an assessment, "which secures an adequate and steady relief to the poor under all the varying circumstances of place and country. It is most easy and equal; it leaves to the benevolent a larger disposable fund of charity for other objects. Every man contributes, according to a general rate, his fair proportion. Every man bearing his fair proportion, the demand from each individual is comparatively small. Nor do the poor feel the advantage of such a law merely by the direct aid which it affords. There is a heavy weight of anxious care often removed from a widowed mother's mind by the assurance that she and her children shall not be left wholly destitute, that the children of their worthy father shall not be forced to beg for bread." P. 443.

Dr Thomson's next observation applies chiefly to the collections at church-doors, and is, I really believe, not generally applicable to Scotland, but of its application in some instances I fear there can be no doubt.

"Independent of all other considerations, it is a peculiar hardship, and is extremely grating, that those who are most able, should contribute little or nothing to the support of the poor. It

is very hard, that a gentleman or nobleman, who draws L.20,000 or L.50,000 a-year from his lands, should escape without giving one farthing to the poor of his country. If the poor could be supported without the assistance of the rich, there would be less room for complaint; but as this is impracticable, there is a necessity for *getting at them* in one way or another, and no other means seems so effectual as a legal assessment.

“We are quite aware that schemes may be set on foot for supporting the poor, without having recourse to legal means, which may prosper for a time under the management of some man of very uncommon popularity, and very uncommon exertion. But the support of the poor ought to depend on what may be calculated upon, as the mere average of popularity and exertion which is to be expected among those who have the management of them. Experience may assure us, that these qualities will never be so universal as to insure an adequate supply to the needy, without regular legal measures.

“The dislike to legal assessments, has led some gentlemen to avoid that measure, and to give the sums which are necessary, under the name of voluntary contributions. It is impossible that we can have any objections to this measure; but we have to observe, that it is a mere blind to cover a real assessment; and that if it is perpetual and regular, it will soon come to be understood by the poor in the very same light with an assessment, and produce all the same effects.”—Christian Instructor, *ubi supra*.

“The next objection to assessments is, that they destroy all distinction between the deserving and the undeserving. But Dr McGill here asks, “What is there in a fund raised by assessment more than in any other fund raised for the poor, to prevent discrimination according to character?” And he asserts that this discrimination is more likely to be made, in the distribution of funds entrusted to respectable men by public confidence, than in the distribution of private alms.

“But one of the chief objections to assessments is, that they encourage idleness and improvidence. In answer to this, he observes, that unless we come to the determination that every idle and improvident person should perish in want, we cannot prevent such a sentiment from operating occasionally on the minds of the worthless;—that if relief is not regularly and sufficiently afforded in every necessary case, then some must suffer; and if it is, then the fear of ultimate want is taken away, whatever be the fund from which the aid is given;—that no benevolent person can see a fellow-creature, however worthless, perishing for want; and that the worthless will inevitably count upon this; but when it is known that such a supply as is necessary is given by the public superintendents of the poor, benevolent persons can, with

more ease, refuse the applications of the artful, and give what they can afford to the deserving.

“The conclusion to which Dr M’Gill comes at the close of this Essay, entirely agrees with our own sentiments on this subject ; and it is this, “*That assessments, collections, charitable societies for special purposes, and liberal and regular private charities, in their own place, and when wisely conducted, will be found, united, to do nothing more than is proper for the relief of our fellow-creatures.*” (Ib. p. 475.)—And I would add, nothing more than is politically expedient, and has been found, by the experience of other countries, to be safe and effectual, in order to prevent the numerous and increasing evils which result from allowing any considerable portion of the people to fall into abject destitution and degradation.

It only remains to examine the objection stated to assessments, that they will cut off “the little offerings at the church-doors, gathered from the wages and savings of the labouring part of the population. It is not urged by Mr Monypenny (as indeed it could not be urged, after the examples formerly quoted of English beneficence), that the existence of assessment for the poor affects the amount of voluntary contributions from the land-owners and richer classes ; and it is allowed that, “in certain parishes, after an assessment had been imposed, the church-collections have not very considerably decreased ;” but it is said that “it is far otherwise with the middle classes, on whom a large share of a legal assessment must fall ;” and that the source of revenue arising from the mite, spared every Sabbath to the poor, from the still poorer class, would be almost entirely dried up.

Now as to the middle classes (of which, it is to be observed that only a part in Scotland contributes to any voluntary charities), we may at least say this, that it is not found, in other countries, that their disposition to voluntary charity is diminished ; on the contrary, for reasons formerly given, I believe it to be increased, by the existence of an adequate legal provision for the poor, and the consequent elevation of the average amount of comforts enjoyed by them. When we find, for example, that in Manchester (where the assessment for the poor, as proportioned to the population, is nearly three times as great as in Edinburgh) the “spirit of humanity and liberality towards the poor” is, as Mr Robertson informs me, “on the increase,—that, independently of the legal modes of affording relief during the past winter, large supplies of food have been furnished through the town’s missionaries and other agents, and nearly L.4000 been expended in providing them with clothing ;”—and when we contrast this liberality with the voluntary charity of an Irish, or even a Scotch town, I apprehend we shall find sufficient evidence that

in the middle as well as higher ranks, the existence of assessment is no bar to voluntary charity, although it may alter the direction of it.

The importance of the fund raised from the wages and savings of the labouring population is expressly rested on the benefit thence derived to the character of the givers, rather than the comfort of the receivers, and is an example of that spirit of distrust of the usual character of the lower orders, on which I formerly quoted some observations, which seem to me perfectly just, from Dr M'Gill. I must confess, for my own part, that when I have witnessed the miserable destitution to which many of this class, when disabled for employment, are reduced, notwithstanding that they had done all in their power, in their better days, to increase the fund for the poor of their parishes, I have thought it would have been only justice, to have saved to them that burden on their "wages and savings." It is but too certain, that, independently of these contributions, quite enough of the burden of supporting poverty in Scotland is laid upon *the poor*. On this subject I would again quote a few sentences from Dr Thomson.

"We cannot think it altogether right, that servant men and women, and day-labourers, should be obliged to deny themselves their little comforts, and be prevented from laying up a little of the savings of their prime of life, for their own future subsistence, to save the purses of rich heritors, tenants, merchants, and manufacturers. And, after all that has ever been given in Scotland by these classes in the form of assessments, there has still been abundance of room left for the kindness and charity of relations to one another."—Christian Instructor, *ubi supra*.

But the fact is, that in various countries where an efficient legal provision—partly voluntary, and partly compulsory, exists—*e. g.* Austria and Holland, means have been devised by which the contributions of the lowest classes of society have been regularly demanded and received; and when we consider the efficiency of the means of religious and moral instruction existing in most parts of Scotland, and the general attachment of the people to them, I cannot doubt that with a very little exertion on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities, collections at the church-doors from the labouring class, fully as high in proportion to their means as the assessments on any of the rate-payers, may be regularly secured in Scotland.

Before leaving the subject of assessments, it may be thought necessary for me to say a few words on the subject of the well-known experiment, so long tried in St John's Parish in Glasgow, of providing for the poor without assessment, under the auspices of Dr Chalmers; and to which Mr Monypenny repeatedly refers, as clear proof of the superiority of the voluntary over the legal

system of provision for the poor. In so far as the authority of Dr Chalmers himself is held to be sufficient proof of the excellence of the system, it seems to me sufficient to remind the reader of Dr Chalmers's own statement, that "even when minister of St John's, he never meddled with the details of its pauperism," and that "the applications for relief never reached him;" from which, with all possible deference to one whom I so highly respect, I would infer, that he was not, even then, in a situation to judge of the efficiency of the system, either in relieving their sufferings, or maintaining those habits among the poor, which seem to me to afford the simple and satisfactory tests of the real efficacy of a system intended for their benefit.

Again, it may almost be thought sufficient to state, that this system in St John's was avowedly based on the supposition that pauperism (chiefly on account of its alleged injurious effect on population) is "a moral pestilence," and that the object proposed by it was, not the relief of poverty and suffering, but simply the gradual extinction of pauperism, by throwing the poor, either on their own resources, or on the assistance they could obtain from private friends or connexions. It is obvious that a system which works admirably well with this view, may be extremely deficient, if examined as to its effects on the sufferings and condition of the poor.

Accordingly, it will be observed that Mr Tufnell, whose Report on this parish is so highly commended by Mr Monypenny, does not say a word in regard to the *actual condition* of the poor in it, but dwells with great earnestness on the "triumphant success" of the system in reducing the number of paupers to 72 in a parish of 11,746 people, *i. e.* 0.6 per cent. or 6 in 1000. (Proposed Alteration, &c. App. p. 114.) After the numbers quoted in various parts of this paper, I presume it is unnecessary to say, that the idea of the *destitute* and *dependent poor*, in the heart of a manufacturing city, being only 6 in 1000 of the population, must be quite visionary; and therefore the result of the experiment seems to have been merely this, that the *portion of the destitution*, which took the form of pauperism, (*only a portion, it is to be remembered, taking that form in any part of Scotland*, and less in Glasgow than in most other parts, *viz.* only 2.6 per cent. of the population), was reduced much smaller here, than in other parts of Glasgow.

I am perfectly aware of the farther statement of Mr Tufnell, that "one of the managers assured him, that a constant preference seemed to be given by the poor to St John's, over other parishes, on account of the different way of treating them;" but for this preference he gives, in the next sentence, a perfectly satisfactory reason. "The applicants for aid address themselves, in the



first instance, to persons of station and character, whose sole parochial duty consists in examining into their condition, and who are always ready personally to pay a kind attention to their complaints." "This personal attendance on the poor in St John's parish, is carried to the greatest possible extent; a friendly intercourse between the rich and poor, insures to the latter a just appreciation of their distresses," &c. (Ib. p. 117.) The working of the system, therefore, was this: Every one of the destitute poor in Glasgow, knew perfectly, that in every parish it was only a portion of the destitution that was admitted to any legal claim; and that, when the claim was admitted, the allowance received would be only a pittance. This being so, he naturally enough would prefer that parish in which, although his legal claim would have less chance of being admitted, he would be admitted to the most "friendly intercourse" with the rich, and would have the best chance either of procuring employment, or of getting access to that voluntary charity, which, in all parts of the town, he knew must be his principal resource.

Nor is it surprising, considering what we know of the average degree of practical interest which persons of the higher ranks, in a commercial town, will bestow on the affairs of the poor, that a system requiring this "friendly intercourse," and "personal attendance on the poor," should not have been imitated, either in Glasgow itself, in Edinburgh, or in any other town in Scotland (excepting in Dundee, where the attempt signally failed); that the deacons of St John's should have found their testimony, as Dr Chalmers expresses it, "like the voice of one crying in the wilderness;" and that, "after an independent management of eighteen years," the parish of St John's should have again lapsed "into the general system of Glasgow."

If it had been found, that the people of St John's, during this experiment, were really in a better condition than those of the other parishes in Glasgow; that they maintained a better character, enjoyed more comforts, endured less sufferings, resisted contagious fever better, and multiplied less rapidly,—and if then a sufficient security were given, that, in every parish in Scotland, "the charity of principle and of spontaneous kindness," which Dr Chalmers succeeded in substituting, during that period, for the charity of law, should be equally excited and maintained,—then this experiment might be regarded as a model for imitation; but in the absence of any evidence to shew more than that, during that time, and under that system of personal attendance on the poor, the pauperism of the parish was a smaller fraction of the poverty of the parish, than of other parishes in the city, I apprehend that, with a view to permanent improvement in

the state of the poor in Scotland, we must look elsewhere for such models.

II. Mr Monypenny next considers the bearing of my suggestions on that class of the receivers of the legal charity, to whom the name of "Occasional Poor" is given; and finds fault with me for not stating that, under this title, "a provision is made by the law of Scotland for the relief of able-bodied labourers out of employment." Now, I am quite aware that a fund exists (*viz.* one-half of the church collections), which may be applied at the discretion of the Managers of the Poor, to "occasional poor;" but I know also, 1. That the fund thus applied under the present mode of administration, is only about one-tenth of the whole poor's funds (£14,983 over the whole of Scotland, on an average of the three years 1835-6-7); and, 2. That by far the greater part of this sum goes, *not to able-bodied poor* out of employment, but to persons *temporarily disabled* by sickness or injuries; to families deserted by their parents; the families of imprisoned men, &c.

It is stated, indeed, by Sir H. Moncrieff, in a passage quoted by Mr Monypenny, that "the occasional or industrious poor are assisted when they are laid aside from work by sickness, or accidental causes, and especially during that season of the year which chiefly affects their health, *or suspends their usual labour.*" (Proposed Alteration, &c. p. 48.) But if we inquire how this last provision is actually carried into effect, how many labourers, *e. g.* whose labour is suspended during the winter in Edinburgh, or how many manufacturers thrown out of work in Glasgow, obtain any assistance from this legal provision, we shall find it to be a mere illusion. I put the question to one of the legal administrators of the poor's money in Edinburgh, what he would say to an able-bodied labourer who should apply to him for parochial assistance, when out of work during the winter? and he answered immediately, "I should bid him go about his business;"—no inquiry, it is to be observed, being made as to the truth of the allegation, on which his application proceeds, that he has no business, and can find none.

It is no doubt possible, under the law as it stands, as stated by Sir H. Moncrieff, to give legal relief to able-bodied persons whose usual labour is temporarily suspended, and this I had in view when I stated, that the law of Scotland, if administered in the same spirit as the English, would probably answer the same purposes. But practically this is *so very seldom done*, that the legal provision is no resource whatever to the unemployed poor in Scotland; and there is in consequence a great amount of desti-

tution, suffering, and disease, which might be avoided if it were done.

Mr Monypenny is much astonished, however, that any wish should be expressed to grant a *right* of relief to the able-bodied industrious poor, “in the face of the reasoning of the late Lord Chancellor, and in spite of the example of England, and of the evils brought upon her, so loudly complained of, and so severely felt, and thus to plunge at once into the depths of the lamented and acknowledged errors of the English system.” (P. 53.)

Although I trust that the fallacy of these statements must be obvious to almost every reader who has attended to the argument maintained in the foregoing pages, this accusation is so serious as to demand a little explanation.

1. The reasoning of the Lord Chancellor in this, as in the former case, proceeds on the assumption expressed in the passage quoted by Mr Monypenny (P. 51), that nothing “more mischievous, nothing more fatal to the country, *nothing more calculated to multiply indefinitely the numbers of the poor*, can be conceived, than applying to them *any regular or fixed provision*, be it tithe, or be it tax, which they can claim at the hands of the rich;” and that “any permanent fund set apart for their support, from whomsoever proceeding, and by whomsoever administered, must needs *multiply the evils it is destined to remedy*.” If this be taken for granted, no doubt Mr Monypenny is quite justified in his opposition to any such proposal as that of granting the right of relief to the able-bodied poor, and would be justified in opposition to any description of relief to the poor; but to take it for granted is simply to beg the question; for it is the very principle, as to the effect of poor laws on population, which I maintain to be the reverse of the truth, which I have endeavoured to refute by appeals to experience on a large scale, and which Mr Monypenny himself, as we have seen, does not venture explicitly to defend,—admitting that “it is not distinctly made out, to a precise and definite extent.

2. Lord Brougham asserted in the same speech, that the system of giving a legal claim to relief in England had “ended in the destruction of all independent character in the English peasant.” But this assertion obviously applied only to the system of *indiscriminate* relief to the able-bodied poor, without any test of destitution, which, as I have repeatedly stated, is now done away in England, and is not thought of in Scotland.

3. In like manner, the “evils so loudly complained of, and so severely felt in England,” were either temporary and local abuses, occasionally occurring in any extensive system, and requiring and receiving occasional correction,—or they were evils resulting from that great and indiscriminate out-door relief, and general

abuse of applying the poor rate to the payment of the wages of labour, the correction of which in England has certainly not sufficiently fixed the attention of Mr Monypenny.

That it was, however, a very exaggerated statement to represent those abuses of the English poor law as having generally "destroyed the independent character of the English peasant," and made him anxious to throw himself on the parish, instead of maintaining himself by labour, appears distinctly from a passage formerly quoted from Mr Revans. (P. 59, 2d edit.)

The following passage from the Quarterly Review is exactly to the same purpose, and is obviously the result of practical observation.

"It is a complete mistake to suppose, as some appear to do, that the labourers of England prefer pauperism to independent industry. Where parochial dependence has become common, it has been *forced upon them* by the persevering efforts of the administrators of the poor laws, who, conspiring with the employers of labour to lower the rate of wages, have *prevented* the labourer from obtaining employment, and, consequently, a maintenance, *except on condition of his becoming a pauper*. Mr Hale justly observes, as the result of his long experience,—'A poor man will rise up early, he will sit up late, he will eat the bread of carefulness, he will undergo the most severe privations, before he will take a single shilling, so long as he can carry his head independently, and say, "I thank God, I have never been a pauper; thank God, not one of my family ever took any thing from the parish."'

"If this is a true statement of the feeling generally entertained by our peasantry towards parochial dependence, *and we are convinced of its truth after no narrow experience of our own*, it is not to be expected that they will be found to resist the abolition of a system which degrades them in their own estimation. (Quarterly Review, vol. 1. p. 359," *i. e.* the abolition of "allowance system," then in contemplation, and since carried into effect.\*

Mr Monypenny next adverts to the proposal of having workhouses more generally in Scotland, and confining the relief of the able-bodied, unless under very peculiar circumstances, to them, as in the present practice in England. "This," he says, "opens up a new field of inquiry, *and of astonishment*;" and he then proceeds to use the expressions on which I formerly commented, as to workhouses being only useful "as a strong and almost

\* The small number of English poor whom we occasionally see in Edinburgh have furnished me with several cases in confirmation of these statements, some with families out of work, who know that they have a claim on the workhouses of their unions, and express gratitude for it, but are determined, if possible, to maintain themselves in independence by their own industry, and submit to great privations rather than abandon their design,

desperate remedy for *the disease* of pauperism," when it has reached a high degree of malignity ; and asks, " Is it prudent to *create the disease* in order that the remedy may be administered ?" (P. 54.)

On this I cannot help observing, that in his zeal to extirpate the alleged disease, Pauperism, Mr Monypenny has apparently lost sight of the real, increasing and truly lamentable disease, which is the true object of all this discussion,—Destitution and suffering. I beg to remind the readers that my allegations are, that these evils exist in such a degree of intensity in this country, as to call loudly for human assistance, and to threaten us with the displeasure of Heaven,—that a great part of this destitution arises not from disease or accident, or age, but from the want of regular employment—that the only *remedy* on a large scale, which the experience of many nations has shewn to be effectual for meeting these evils, is an adequate legal provision for the poor, implying, of course, that many of the poor must become paupers ;—that the objection to this, founded on the supposed injurious effect of such provision on the numbers or character of the population, is untenable, provided only the remedy be administered with prudence ; but that, like other powerful remedies, it may have injurious effects unless cautiously used,—and that the workhouse is found by experience to be the form of the legal provision, which may be most safely and beneficially applied in the case of the able-bodied poor, because in it destitution may be relieved, and degradation arrested, without the condition of the pauper being rendered more eligible, or more grateful, than that of the independent labourer. All these points I have endeavoured to establish ; but whether they are established or not, I submit that pauperism is not the *disease* (which existed and was urgent, before pauperism was created, and is known to reach its highest malignity where pauperism does not exist), but is the necessary effect of the *remedy* ; and that the workhouse is not intended to conquer pauperism, but to render pauperism (in the case to which it is peculiarly adapted) the safe and effectual means of conquering destitution and misery ; the existence of which, and the necessity of applying remedies to which, are the *point de depart* of the whole discussion.

III. The next question regards the amount of relief bestowed by the administrators of the poor laws in Scotland, whether on the regular or occasional poor, which I have characterised as very generally inadequate to the two distinct objects which, as I think, the legal provision should be intended, and is fitted to secure,—the relief of suffering, and the prevention of degradation

and its attendant evils. On this point, Mr Monypenny observes, that "the principle uniformly adopted is, to ascertain the actual wants of the individual poor, and to proportion the relief to these wants. To one who is entirely destitute, and has no visible means of support either from his own labour or the assistance of relations or neighbours, a larger portion is statedly given; to one who is able to work a little, or has near relations to help him, a smaller sum is bestowed." (P. 55.) This principle, with the exception of the burden thus avowedly thrown on neighbours, all must allow to be unexceptionable; and it is the *very same which is adopted in England*, as the following extract from a letter from Dr Kay will demonstrate: "When a widow, or partially disabled person, in England, receives outdoor relief, that relief is granted after inquiry into the means of support which the applicant possesses, whether these means are derived from labour or from other sources: the amount of relief is determined accordingly. It is granted for a limited period, and the case is subjected to frequent revision, for the purpose of administering the relief to the necessities of the pauper." But the difference is, that, when these preliminary inquiries have been made, the amount granted in England is about *three times* as great as that granted in similar cases in Scotland, besides which a great number are admitted to legal relief in England, who, on one pretext or another, would be altogether excluded in Scotland. And from this, as I apprehend, two consequences result; first, that the English paupers, and poor generally, live in a state of much greater comfort; and secondly, that they and their children are habituated to those *artificial wants*, which seem to me to be of the highest importance in elevating the character, and in restraining the numbers, of the lower orders of any community.

We have seen, that in such a town as that examined by Mr Chambers, while only a portion of the destitute are admitted to parish relief, the usual relief given to those who are admitted is "not more than half what will barely support life." We have seen, that, by the statement of an admirer of the Scotch system, in many of the country parishes the allowances are such as seem fitted "only to embitter the passage to disease and death;" we have seen, that, by the statement of the Managers of the Charity Workhouse in Edinburgh, but for the aid given by the suffering poor to one another, "the sum raised in Edinburgh by assessment would be utterly insufficient to support all the poor that barely exist." In short, it is quite obvious, that the practical result of the Scotch system is to make a very great portion of the destitute poor dependent for their existence, not on the rich, but on the neighbouring poor.

In illustration of the smallness of the allowances granted here, I may instance two of the last cases into which I have inquired. The first was that of a widow, of weakly habit of body, as far as I can learn of good character, and burdened with two children under ten. She had 9d. a-week; and during last winter, after the "potato gathering" was over, assured me that she had never been able to earn above 1s. a-week by labour, often not so much; but her application for additional assistance during the winter was refused. The other was a poor woman, in whom I felt an interest, in consequence of knowing her generous and disinterested conduct to an orphan child, whom she had rescued from misery, and brought up with her own. She was dismissed from the Infirmary in the last stage of an incurable disease. Her husband had been long disabled by inveterate asthma, insomuch that the Destitute Sick Society had at length discontinued relief to him; and they had the child above mentioned and another of their own dependent on them. In these circumstances, they applied to the parish, and, after considerable delay, were put on the list of occasional poor, with an allowance of *one shilling a-week*. Those who have seen the gradual disappearance of clothing and furniture from the house of a family so situated, may form an idea of the amount of comforts that surrounded the deathbed of this really virtuous and generous woman.

Mr Monypenny seems to have taken up the idea, that allowances granted to the paupers in England are the sole means of their support, instead of being, as in Scotland, in aid of such labour as they can perform, and of other resources; and I must admit that he is so far justified in this, by some remarks in the last Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, in which they condemn the practice of allowing out-door relief to those who can work at all. This principle seems to me a very doubtful one; but Dr Kay informs me, that no order has issued by the Commissioners in conformity with it, and that the practice of all the Boards of Guardians therefore continues to be as stated above.

Mr Monypenny digresses a little here to defend assertions contained in his former work, relative to the English poor, as compared with the Scotch, which I had characterised as gratuitous, viz. 1. That the rates for their support are not only high, but continually increasing; 2. That they are idle and improvident *as compared with the Scotch*; and, 3. That they receive parochial aid with discontent.

I beg to say that when I used the term gratuitous, and said that the first of these assertions was the reverse of the truth, I did not mean to apply these expressions to Mr Monypenny personally, being quite aware that the same assertions had been pre-

viciously made by many others ; but that they are in effect gratuitous, and not supported by any such evidence as can be properly taken as a foundation for legislative measures, I still maintain.

It will be observed that, when I denied that the English Poor Rates had been continually increasing, in proportion either to the increasing wealth or population of the country, I referred to a former part of my paper (p. 28), where it had been explained, that much of this *apparent* increase was fallacious, having arisen from a great part of the fund raised under that name, having been diverted to purposes quite distinct from the relief of the poor, especially to the payment of wages of labour. It was *after deduction* of that part of the fund, that I asserted, on the authority of various writers there named, that there had been no increase in the sums raised *for the relief of the poor*. Accordingly, we find that the authority on which Mr Monypenny relies for proof of the continued increase of the poor rates (the Report of the Committee of 1817), states the great increase which had taken place *between 1784 and 1815* (from 2,004,238 to 5,072,028), that is, during the time when that *allowance system* was becoming general in the southern parts of England ; and that the increase depended principally on that cause, appears clearly from the fact formerly stated, that, as soon as the allowance system ceased, the amount of the tax was diminished by L.2,300,000 a-year, nearly a third of its amount, without any material abridgment of the comforts of the poor, and without the *right of relief* being denied to any description of sufferers.

Again, I admitted that " idleness and improvidence were to a certain degree favoured in England by that injudicious part of the law ;" and only denied that there was any evidence either of idleness, or improvidence, or intemperance, being *comparatively* greater in England than in Scotland ; and the evidence stated by Mr Monypenny, (p. 60 of his pamphlet), only goes to confirm my statement as to idleness and improvidence being encouraged by that part of the law, and to shew that these evil qualities exist there, as they do in all countries, and that they have been diminished there by the change in the law ; and does not touch the question of the *comparative* amount of them in England and other countries, which is the point that requires to be established, in order to prove the alleged evil effect of the legal provision.

I must here add, that Mr Monypenny does me great injustice when he alleges, either that I wish the principle of granting allowances only in aid of other *known* resources, " to be contemned and entirely disregarded," or that *nothing but the poverty* of the applicant ought to be inquired into, the object being merely " to relieve his destitution, and administer such assistance as will tend to his comfort, and the health and happiness of his family." I



certainly complain of the allowances being often given in aid of *supposed* resources, the existence of which is not inquired into. I am quite aware, at the same time, that the rate-payers are entitled, in perfect justice, to protection against exorbitant demands, imposition, and misapplication of the funds raised from them. But I have stated, and given reasons for thinking (p. 80, et seq.), that it is not a misapplication of those funds, to *relieve destitution*, wherever it exists, and by whatever cause it may have been produced; and farther, that there can be no wiser application of those funds, than to *prevent degradation*, particularly in the case of the young; and to fulfil these objects, I think it quite obvious that the rate of allowances to aged and infirm persons, widows and orphans, ought to be much higher than at present.

My statement was, not "that nothing but the poverty of the applicant ought to be inquired into," but that, in the case of bad characters, "destitution ought to give the claim, and the moral demerits of the applicants *ought to be regarded as a guide to the kind of relief* which should be granted" (p. 83); which of course implies, that their characters should be carefully inquired into. Indeed, it seems to me quite necessary to the proper management of a legal provision, that a much more rigid *surveillance* of all who receive such relief, than is usual in Scotland, should be constantly exercised; and that the administrators of the legal charity should every where have a workhouse at their command, well regulated, and admitting of classification, in which the misapplication of the relief given is impossible. Under the operation of such a system many disorderly and improvident persons would disappear from the view of society, and undergo a punishment suited to their demerits; and that great body of well disposed persons, in all ranks, who are, and always will be, desirous of doing more for the poor than the law requires them to do, would be enabled to reconcile it to their consciences to refuse such voluntary relief, excepting in cases of which they had satisfactory information.

Mr Monypenny misapprehends my meaning farther when he says, that "to deal out to the poor the rates or amount of relief which I think necessary for their comfort and conducive to their health," would be "to open a wide door by which *able-bodied* labourers will be invited and encouraged to enter into the haunts of pauperism," &c., and when he illustrates this, by referring to the fundamental rule laid down by the English Commissioners, that "the pauper's situation shall not be made really or apparently so eligible as that of the independent labourer of the lowest class." This rule obviously applies to the *able-bodied* paupers, as appears from the apprehension expressed in the next sentence of the Report of the English Commissioners, lest the independent

poor should be induced "to quit the less eligible class of *labourers*, and enter the more eligible class of paupers." This principle seems to me a very just one, and therefore I expressly stated formerly, that I think relief to the able-bodied should, as a general rule, only be given in the workhouses; but all this does not touch the question of the amount of allowances to the *aged and disabled* poor, and the *widows burdened with young children*, and these are the cases for which I have recommended that the out-door allowances should be augmented. How increased allowances to *this description* of the poor should "lower and reduce to pauperism many a labourer who, were not this course followed, would remain, as before, contented, industrious, and independent," I confess I cannot perceive.

The English Commissioners expressly state their opinion, not only that "a compulsory provision for the relief of the indigent (*i. e.* as they explained it, of those who are 'unable to labour, or unable to obtain, in return for their labour, the means of subsistence'), can be administered on a sound and well defined principle;" but farther, that compulsory relief to the able-bodied, under strict regulations, adequately enforced, may be afforded safely "and more beneficially." (Report, 1834.)

That such persons as are known to be wholly or partially disabled for labour, should receive such regular allowances as may enable them, with the aid either of such work as they may do, or such other resources as they may command, to maintain their rank in society, and preserve them and their families at once from destitution and degradation, and that, when their conduct is good, they should be allowed to enjoy these allowances in their own houses, seems to me to be a principle equally recommended by humanity and sound policy; I have never been able to perceive any advantage which Scotland derives from such unfortunate persons being exposed to so much more hardship and suffering than the corresponding classes in England or other countries, and until some such advantage is clearly pointed out, I do not think I am fairly liable to the imputation of being biassed in this opinion by "the impressions of sensibility and excited feeling;" or of being led away by an enthusiasm akin to religious fanaticism. I do not expect, for example, to see the condition of a poor widow, with young children, even of good character, made in all respects as eligible as that of an independent labourer; but I cannot see that there is any advantage to the community in having it so miserably depressed, that when, after being so long out of work, she obtains employment, she should find herself, however anxious for the sake of her children (as several of them have assured me with tears), so enfeebled by mere want of sustenance,

that she is unable to continue it ;—or that, looking around her on the helpless and desolate condition of her children, her feelings should be such as are expressed in the pathetic words (which I have heard, and at which I could not wonder), “ I have borne seven children in the town of Edinburgh, I have laid four of them in the Greyfriars, and I pray to God that I could lay the rest beside them.” If it is the dream of an enthusiast to hope that the law may yet extend a similar protection to such sufferers with us, as it does in various other countries, I can only say that it is a dream which will last my lifetime ; and that I should wish, by what I have now written, to bequeath it to those who may come after me in the same path of duty, to cheer the hearts of others, as it has done mine, in many a solitary wandering through the abodes of poverty and suffering.

IV. The last question of detail as to the legal relief of the poor in Scotland on which Mr Monypenny comments, is the “ description of persons to whom is entrusted the collection and administration of the funds ;” and here he finds fault with my assertion, that the relief of the destitute in large towns, cannot be safely entrusted to the voluntary system, because the higher ranks neither can nor will bestow sufficient time on the affairs of the poor, to dispense such relief gratuitously and effectually in all the cases that may require it. He observes, that, “ in every parish and in every church, there is a kirk-session, the members of which are ready, either collectively or individually, to become the almoners of their brethren,” &c. (P. 72.) This description, it is well known, does not apply to Edinburgh, or to other royal burghs, in which the magistrates are the legal guardians of the poor, who, in this town, devolve their powers on the managers of the Charity Workhouse, who again employ a single inspector for the whole town, very seldom undertaking the duty of visiting the poor themselves. The clergymen and elders have no other power than that of recommending cases to these managers, which is equally enjoyed by all citizens. And in other towns, as he states, “ a board is generally constituted by representatives from the several kirk-sessions and various public bodies” for this purpose ; and he expresses great satisfaction in stating the fact, that, over all Scotland, there are 7542 persons “ giving their gratuitous services in the active and ordinary management of the poor :” on which I would only observe, that, in this multitude of counsellors,—in many parts of the country, at least,—there is more safety for the rich than for the poor.

“ Possessed of such powerful machinery for the management of the poor,” he adds, “ the members of it acting gratuitously,

consisting of the ministers of the different parishes and many respectable inhabitants, well acquainted with the people, and *anxious to relieve their wants*,\* is it to be credited that we will consent to deprive ourselves of such signal advantages, and proceed to employ paid inspectors and other hired agents?" (P.75.)

On this I have only to observe, that in England, and I believe in all countries where the legal provision exists, there are numerous boards of guardians or other managers, regulating the relief to the poor, acting gratuitously, and of authority superior to any of the paid inspectors. In most parts of Scotland, I believe that this duty would be fully as well performed by the ministers and kirk-sessions as by any other body; and even in the large towns, if there were a better arrangement and division of the parishes (as has been repeatedly suggested here), the affairs of the poor might be satisfactorily superintended by them. But all this does not preclude the employment of paid inspectors or relieving officers, subordinate to these boards; and if the wants of the destitute poor were to be supplied as promptly, and their character and conduct to be watched as carefully, as I think they should be, the general employment of such paid agents would be nearly indispensable. In order that the legal provision may answer its purposes, there must be a security for its being applied without delay to all cases demanding it; and in order that this may be obtained, the right of claiming it must be enforced, as in other countries, by penalties on those who fail to administer it where it is due. If this were done, all the boards of management would quickly see the importance of relieving themselves of responsibility, by employing paid agents to act under their orders, as is done in Edinburgh and other large towns, with this difference from the English practice, that whereas there one relieving officer is generally appointed to the care of the poor of from 5000 to 10,000 people, in Edinburgh one such man is entrusted with the superintendence of the poor of 55,000 people.

I have now considered, although not in the same order in which they are there presented, all the statements contained in Mr Monypenny's Pamphlet, which appeared to me of importance in regard to the question at issue. In conclusion, I beg once more to express my unfeigned respect for the author, and belief in the benevolence of his intentions. But I must also beg once more to impress on the reader, that the decision of the practical question must ultimately turn on the establishment or abandonment of the doctrine of Malthus and his followers, that all legal provision for the poor must necessarily give a stimulus to popu-

\* This must always be understood with a reservation to this effect, *according to their ideas of the extent to which it is expedient to relieve them.*

lation, and so “ multiply the evils it is destined to remedy.” If this doctrine is found by experience to be true, all that I have written is useless, and the sooner it is forgotten the better ; but until I shall see it proved, by facts and reasonings very different from any that I have yet seen employed for the purpose, I shall not cease to maintain, that the small amount of the legal provision made in Scotland for the aged, disabled, and unemployed poor, is neither justified by Christian principles, by humane feeling, nor by political expediency.



**REPLY, &c.**





# REPLY

TO

DR CHALMERS' OBJECTIONS

TO AN

IMPROVEMENT OF THE LEGAL PROVISION FOR  
THE POOR IN SCOTLAND.

BY

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MDCCCXLI.



## P R E F A C E.

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I AM aware that I owe an apology to the Public for bringing forward in some parts of the present, as in former, replies to the objections which have been urged against my suggestions for the improvement of the condition of the Poor in Scotland, several statements and reasonings almost exactly to the same purpose as those contained in my first pamphlet on this subject. But I submit, that if the arguments contained in the following pages shall appear to be well founded, the public have more reason to complain of my opponents, for not having taken notice of the statements which I had made, in anticipation of their objections, than of my bringing forward a repetition of those statements.

I am aware also, that it may be thought imprudent, in reference to the practical object for which alone I have entered on this subject, again to encounter that national feeling which, as I always expected, is excited by the comparison of our institutions for the relief of the poor with those of England. But I think any one who reflects on the subject must perceive, that the excitement of that feeling was inevitable. An increase of the legal provision for the poor in Scotland must tend to approximate that provision to the system now in force in England, and if any suggestions for increased allowances to the poor in Scotland had been coupled with an admission, that the Scotch system is, on the whole, better than the English, the admission would have so far neutralized the suggestion, as to afford little hope of any substantial improvement. I cannot, therefore, regret

having made, and after repeated inquiries and reflections on the subject, advisedly repeat, the assertion, that notwithstanding the local and temporary abuses of which we have heard so much, the English system, of uniformly enforcing the law for the relief of the poor,—of granting to aged and disabled persons, widows, and orphans, such allowances as secure to them a certain degree of comfort, beyond the mere necessities of life,—and of giving the right of relief, under certain conditions, to able-bodied unemployed persons,—has (when prudently administered) no such injurious tendency, either on the extension of the population, or on the character of the poor, as has been very generally ascribed to it in Scotland; and that, on the contrary, the relief of human suffering thus accomplished is a national virtue, attended with important national benefits, which it were wise for us to imitate.

I have mentioned the particulars in which I consider the English system decidedly preferable to the Scotch, because it has been repeatedly stated, that my object was to change the agents, or machinery, for the administration of relief to the poor in Scotland; whereas my object has always been, to point out the importance of a change in the amount, and occasionally in the kind, of the relief given, and in the persons to whom it should be extended; and I have never had any wish that the agency should be changed, farther than may be found necessary for securing those objects, and at the same time preventing abuses.

It is quite true that there is, at this moment, a very unusual amount of suffering in England, only partially relieved by the legal provision. For this, various reasons may be given: I need only mention the “multi-

tudes of Irish and Scotch wholly without parish relief," in all the great towns of England; the rapid depression, from various causes, in the demand for manufacturing industry; and (I strongly suspect also) the want of any law of settlement by industrial residence. I have repeatedly said, that I do not believe the English system has yet attained the degree of excellence to which I hope it is destined; but if the means of instituting a fair and detailed comparison shall be afforded, I am confident that the superiority of that system, in the degree of relief which it gives to human suffering, and in the maintenance of those habits of comfort, which are the best security against excessive population, and the best preparation for effective religious and moral instruction, may be easily established.

We know, for example, that in Glasgow, in the year 1837, contagious fever caused 20 per cent. of the annual mortality; and in Dundee, in 1836, it caused 15 per cent.: whereas, in no town in England, in any year of the present century, has it caused 8 per cent. We know that the average mortality in Glasgow (*i.e.* in one-tenth of the whole population of Scotland), for the whole five years ending 1840, exceeded by 25 per cent. the mortality for the five years ending 1830.\* We know, from the late census, that, in the most destitute parts of Glasgow, the population has increased from 20 to 40 per cent., while the number of inhabited houses has not increased at all. We know that, within the last few years (and excluding the year of the visitation of cholera, when it was still higher), the mortality in one year, in Glasgow, has been as high as 1 in 24; in Edinburgh, 1 in

\* Reports on the late Census, by Mr Strang, Chamberlain of Glasgow, and by Mr Watt, author of the Mortality Bills.

25 ; and in Dundee, 1 in 27,—being 20 per cent., 16 per cent., and 12 per cent. higher than that of London or Manchester, and still higher above that of Leeds and Birmingham, in the most unhealthy year of the present century; and we know that for this crowding, this extension of epidemic disease, and this mortality, in the judgment of the most experienced observers, “the most influential of all causes is Poverty and Destitution.” We know farther, that, in the opinion of the Superintendent of the Lock Hospital at Glasgow, “more than half the inmates are driven to their course of life by want of the means of subsistence ;” and that, in the judgment of the Superintendent of Police at Glasgow, “it is imperatively necessary, in the view of repressing crime, to make some better provision for the destitute poor.” With this evidence before us, I do not think it wise, or worthy of an intelligent and enlightened people, to repudiate all information or advice from our Southern neighbours, at the moment when we are sending deputations to supplicate their charity for the suffering poor in the west of Scotland ; to request them, as Dr Chalmers counsels us, “to keep their distance,” and not presume to advise us how the poor should be provided for ; or to form associations for the avowed purpose of “opposing any official inquiry into the condition of the poor in Scotland.” On the contrary, I cannot but think that it is doing some service to the country, to make known the *condition*, as well as the cost of the poor, in England to the Scottish people, and in Scotland to the English, and endeavour to procure a fair and impartial comparison of the practical results of both systems of management on human life and happiness.

## REPLY, &c.

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IT is obviously important that the public should distinctly understand on what points it is, that those who have taken opposite sides in this controversy are really at variance. Dr Chalmers did me the honour to say at Glasgow, that in reading my pamphlet on the Management of the Poor in Scotland, he found much more with which he agreed than from which he differed ; and I can conscientiously return this compliment, because the greater part of Dr Chalmers' recent work appears to me to be employed in establishing what I do not at all doubt,—the abstract *excellence* of that “ parochial system” which he recommends, and wishes to see general throughout Scotland ; and comparatively small portions of it only are devoted to the proof of the *practicability* of the system being generally enforced, so as to meet all cases of destitution, without the aid of the law,—of its *sufficiency* in itself to give adequate relief,—and of its *incompatibility* with a legal provision for the poor ; and these are the points, in a practical view, especially demanding proof, and in regard to which I must once more respectfully express my total dissent from his opinion.

There is no difference of opinion between Dr Chalmers and me, as to the duty of the higher orders to exert themselves constantly and systematically for the bene-

fit of the poor ; nor as to the fact, that this duty has been very much neglected in this country. He says expressly (p. 69), that “the rich have done much worse” than the poor ; and speaks of the “cruel neglect and abandonment of the poor by the upper ranks of society,—chiefly in great towns, where the greatest injustice has been done them,” as “the greatest palliation for their misconduct.” The main difference of opinion is simply as to the most feasible and practicable means by which the various evils resulting from this neglect and abandonment of the poor may be corrected. I have repeatedly said, also, that I concur in all that Dr Chalmers and others have stated as to the importance of the principle of locality in the administration of all charity, as to the importance of the formation or subdivision of parishes, of the regular superintendence of the poor in each district by the higher ranks, and of a kindly intercourse between them ; and of the religious instruction which may thus be given, and, I would add, be *received* also, by those who undertake the administration of the public charity.

But the practical questions are, 1. Whether, in the present condition of this country, there is any security for this system being carried uniformly into effect, so as to give such relief to destitution as is given in other countries,—equitably towards the rich and beneficially towards the poor,—on the merely voluntary principle ; and, 2. Whether it is essential to the success of the parochial system of the administration of charity, that it should have no connexion with the law, either for the support of its funds, or the enforcement of its duties.

1. On the first point, I shall only quote two short passages from Dr Chalmers’ work, which seem to me sufficient to shew how small a chance there is of the voluntary system, which he so warmly recommends, being so



generally adopted as to afford any security against destitution and its attendant evils throughout Scotland. The one is his confession that his "contest of twenty-five years with public functionaries has been weary and ineffectual." (P. 181.) Even supposing his example and authority to be supreme in the church, when we remember that in all questions regarding the poor, the heritors in the country parishes, and the magistrates in towns, are parties concerned, what prospect does this confession afford us, of his plans being generally realized? And when we remember that no other parish, in Glasgow or in any other town, has followed the example which he set in St John's, is it reasonable to trust to that example being followed universally in Scotland, as the only remedy for sufferings which are described by the Church of Scotland herself, as "too often greater than it could be conceived possible that a Christian country could tolerate, or that human nature could endure?"\*

The other passage to which I allude is that in which he describes the qualifications of the visitors, whom he afterwards imagines as invested with the character and authority of deacons of the Church, and to whom he wishes the care of the poor all over Scotland to be confided. I do not allude merely to the religious, moral, and intellectual qualifications which he describes (and which are certainly not every day to be met with) but especially to the "full proof of his own liberality" which each deacon is expected to give. When "necessity stands unequivocally before him," it is "his clearly imperative and incumbent duty, not to stifle the impulses of compassion, but fully and freely to give way to them." It appears from passages to be afterwards quoted, that he contem-

\* See Pastoral Address by the General Assembly to the Church, published July 1841.

plates giving full exercise to this personal benevolence ; and in fact he does not deny, that a considerable expenditure of this private charity, from deacons and elders, took place in the parish of St John's during the administration of its affairs under his plan. (P. 118 *et seq.*) Such a man is to be provided for every fifty families in Scotland (see p. 105), and it is in the expectation that this system is to work voluntarily, uniformly, and effectually, that all other attempts to improve the provision for the poor in Scotland are to be abandoned.

The *only security* for the effectual relief of all cases of destitution is to be found in the attention, humanity, and judgment of these deacons, who will, in general, be the only administrators of the public charity coming actually in contact with the poor. Now, making every allowance for the humane and conscientious dispositions of these very numerous functionaries, I venture to say, that their rules of conduct will be exceedingly various, and sometimes very absurd ; and that with many the most powerful motive will be to secure the applause of their brethren in the Kirk-Session, in whose estimation, I strongly suspect, economy will very generally be the leading virtue, and "the man who can manage with least money will be the most praised." I believe that, in process of time, and under the operation of a system really securing to the greater number of the poor comforts superior to those which they now enjoy, there will be a gradual change in the feelings with which the destitute poor will be generally regarded in Scotland ; but for a long time to come, I have no doubt that the deacon who saves most money will be the most popular member of most Kirk-Sessions ; and I cannot conscientiously say that I believe, that, under such a sys-

tem, even if generally established—unchecked by any legal authority—the interests of the poor will be duly regarded.

Then again, for every eight or ten such deacons, there is to be a Church and School; and while the rich are “not to be exempted from sacrifices, large in proportion to their means,” for the relief of poverty, Dr Chalmers is “not so anxious for their shillings to expend in alms-giving, as for their pounds, and that in goodly number too, to assist and maintain the institutions by which the health and morals and Christian education of all are to be provided for” (p. 255). Now, knowing as I do, the difficulty of raising the regular supplies, even for the most necessary medical charities in Scotland on the voluntary principle, and remembering what Dr Chalmers himself states of the “most tenacious resistance” which has been generally experienced from Scotch landowners, “to claims preferred for the extension of the means of religious instruction” (p. 225), I am fully persuaded that the supposition of the whole country being voluntarily arranged in well-organized and well-worked parishes, on this plan and of these dimensions, and of all the poor being sufficiently provided for by voluntary donations thus secured, is absolutely Utopian.

2. The next difficulty which presents itself when we speculate on the probability of this system being generally effectual for the relief of destitution is, that the provision contemplated by Dr Chalmers is not a provision for all the poor, but only for “the deserving poor.” The practical result is to be “a full measure of relief for the deserving, with a *leaving out* of the undeserving” (P. 161). The peculiar vocation of the deacons of St John’s parish, it is stated, was “to discriminate between the deserving and the undeserving poor; and the latter were *kept at bay*, or shamed out of their impor-

tunities." It might be thought by some that the "undeserving" here meant only those not really destitute ; but this is certainly not the meaning, for he distinctly says that the object is to let the undeserving " feel the weight of those *severities* which are intended by the God of Nature to follow in the train of idleness, improvidence, and vice" (p. 175) ; implying that the exclusion is to be the punishment for those sins. It is by the judgment of the deacons, in all parts of the country, that the distinction of those who are to be relieved, and those who are to be " left out," is to be established ; and this latter doom is to be denounced, not on themselves only, but on their innocent children ; for Dr Chalmers expressly finds fault with the item of " foundlings, illegitimates, and the children of runaway parents" in the accounts of St John's parish, and says, "*These, however otherwise disposed of, ought not to be supported or countenanced by an ecclesiastical charity*" (p. 136). Of course, as there is to be, in this system, no other public charity, they must be left to beggary or starvation.

Now, I shall not here enter on the question, whether this systematic exclusion, from the benefits of charity, of all those whom sinful and fallible men pronounce to be " undeserving,"—of the innocent children of certain descriptions of sinners,—and of all children who may be deserted by their parents,—is justified by Christian principle or humane feeling ; whether any human being is " undeserving" of succour, who is likely to perish from want of food, fuel, and clothing ; or whether this system is consistently recommended by one who tells us that, " while the poor do very ill, the rich do much worse ;" and that " the greatest palliation for the misconduct of the poor, especially in the great towns, is the cruel neglect and abandonment of them by the upper ranks of society." But I can say with per-

fect confidence, and certainly from more opportunities of observation than Dr Chalmers can have had (for “after the first month of the operation of the system in St John’s, he never once had to do with the management of a single case of pauperism there”) (p. 143), what is the practical result of this system of exclusion. It is not to improve the conduct, and certainly not to restrain the prolific powers, but simply to *lower the habits* of those who are excluded,—to make them beggars, vagrants, and very frequently thieves; it is to relieve the rich of their maintenance, only to throw them as a burden on the poor; to swell the population of the country with unprofitable and dangerous members; to frustrate, if it does not withhold, any effective moral or religious instruction for them; and to multiply and perpetuate the vices which it merely repels, and vainly attempts to repress. The principle seems to be established in all countries where the management of the poor has been carefully studied, and I have no doubt will ultimately be established in Scotland also,—that any provision against ascertained destitution professing to “leave out” that which is dependent on vice, is deficient in one of the most important elements of its usefulness.\* The *mode* of relief and the checks on its abuse, ought to vary with the character of the sufferer; but the extension of relief to the vicious sufferer is at least equally important, for the well-being of society, as to the virtuous.

Another most important consideration is, that, in this system, no provision appears to be made for that destitution which results from *want of employment*—whether depending on mere redundancy of population, in those

\* I have endeavoured to illustrate this in my *Observations on the Management of the Poor, &c.*, p. 80-84, and *Reply to Mr Milne*, Second Report of Association on Pauperism, p. 48-50.

parts where the demand for labour is nearly uniform, or on the continual fluctuations in the demand for manufacturing industry ; a source of destitution which has now become, and, in all probability, will henceforth continue, so frequent in Scotland, as to demand imperatively some more permanent provision than has yet been made for it. From Dr Chalmers' continual representations of the efficacy of means of " stimulating the industry " of the poor, it is obvious that he has had little practical experience of the difficulty of providing for those, for whose industry there is no demand. He speaks, indeed, of the efficacy of savings-banks in providing for occasional loss of employment ; and it is very true that this is a resource, for a time, useful to those who, when employed, have good wages ; and that, under good moral management, it may be very considerably improved. But it is equally certain that destitution in this form comes upon vast numbers,—as, for example, the hand-loom weavers, the field workers resident in towns, many artisans, and day-labourers, piecers in cotton-mills, &c., whose wages, when they are employed, are hardly such as to command more than the necessities of life, and *admit of no accumulations*.

3. But even if I believed that the parochial system of Dr Chalmers would ultimately be universally adopted in Scotland, and that it would give sufficient security for the relief of destitution, I cannot perceive that it affords any objection whatever to the extension of the legal provision, unless it were proved that the two changes are incompatible with one another. This is indeed strongly and repeatedly stated by Dr Chalmers ; but the reasons given for it seem to me to be merely a repetition of assertions frequently made, which I have formerly fully considered, and my answers to which are here passed over *sub silentio*.

The substance of his arguments on this point seems

to be, that a legal provision necessarily implies an injury to the characters of those receiving it, which it is the main object and attribute of the parochial system to avert; and among the “many errors” into which he thinks I have fallen, that which he particularly regrets, is my supposing that private benevolence must have similar effects on the character of the poor as legal charity. This, he says, is not the case when it is a “benevolence which considers as well as compassionates, which times and suits its ministrations to the fully ascertained exigencies of each distinct case.” (P. 249.)

Now, I am quite willing to take these words as expressing the kind of charity which will really do no injury to the character of those receiving it, but will bless him that takes equally as him that gives. But Dr Chalmers does not observe, that the very essence of my argument in favour of the legal provision, so far as the character of the poor is concerned, is, that, when administered with common prudence, *it answers to this description in a much greater number of cases, than the voluntary system, in a complex state of society—where the rich and the poor live much asunder—ever does*; and, accordingly, that, when not abused, it has no generally injurious influence on character; and this I think I have proved by a variety of evidence, both on a small scale and on a large, of which he takes no notice.\*

\* Dr Chalmers lays no great stress, in this work, on the supposed pernicious effects of a legal provision on the *industry or independence* of the labouring poor; but as I know that this apprehension is still very strong in Scotland, I shall quote two testimonies, of competent observers, to prove how unfounded is the assertion, that the English system of compulsory relief to destitution, *when not abused*, has any such injurious tendency.

In the debate on the Poor-law Commission Bill, 1st October 1841, Mr C. Hamilton said, “He had been chairman of one of the largest unions in the kingdom ever since the commencement of the Poor-law Amendment Act, and had carefully watched its operation. It

I stated, that the effect of charity on the character of those receiving it depends much more on the mode of its administration than the source from which it is supplied;—that according to my experience (which is not of yesterday) private charity in great towns, is in general *much more demoralizing than public*, because more irregularly obtained, implying more degradation, and giving more encouragement to imposture;—that the only way, in a complex state of society, in which it can be made regular and discriminating, is to give it the form of a public charity, *i. e.* of a fixed provision, before it reaches the poor,—in which case its difference from a legal provision is hardly perceptible, and *certainly is very often unknown to the receivers*. I stated that every well managed legal provision is accompanied by a system of careful and continued inspection of the poor, “suited to its ministrations had been of infinite service, and proved a great boon to the agricultural interest and the master manufacturers; but he was not blind or insensible to its evils. One effect of it had been to *lower wages*. He repeated that, and could prove it; and those who maintained the contrary could know very little of the working of the workhouse test, *which caused the labourer to accept any terms rather than go there.*” (Times Newspaper, 2d October); *i.e.* the labourers prefer work and independence, on any terms, to idleness and confinement, although certainly unattended by any privations. Again, in a pamphlet entitled *Remarks on the Poor-law Amendment Bill*, by a Guardian (but which I have reason to believe expresses the opinions of the most influential proposer of that bill), I find the following sentences: “Under the system of parochial administration, subject to the control of the nearest magistrate, supported by a nearly absolute power of removal, and the total absence of any *claim* to relief if the applicant refused to enter the workhouse, the Poor-laws were administered during the greater part of the last century. There was a great increase of rates, and much local mismanagement, but no general dissatisfaction or alarm. Agriculture and manufactures improved,—our labourers surpassed in activity and diligence those of any other part of Europe, and improved in conduct. The difficult problem, how to afford to the poorer classes adequate relief, without material injury to their diligence or their prudence, seemed to be solved.” (P. 7.)



to the exigencies of each case," and, as far as possible, to the known character of each recipient. I said that, so far as I have observed, the most frequent and heartless abandonment of relatives is among those of the poor who have no claim to any legal charity, and quoted other observers, who had made similar remarks ; and, on the other hand, I adduced the evidence of various gentlemen, clergymen, medical men, poor-law commissioners, and others long and intimately conversant with the lower ranks in England and elsewhere, to shew that in many parts of England (especially those where the abuses of the Poor-laws had never prevailed) while the spontaneous charities of the rich are greater, family and social affections among the poor are, in their judgment, at least as strong as in Scotland. I quoted various unexceptionable authorities to shew that the same is true of Holland, Germany, and other countries, where there is an ample provision for the poor, secured and enforced by law. And I requested particular attention to the fact, that in all countries, these affections are observed to be strongest in those ranks of society which are raised above the chance of abject destitution ; and that they therefore cannot be reasonably thought likely to be impaired in any rank, by a security against such destitution being given.\* Those were the grounds which I stated for the belief, that social and family affections may flourish among the poor, and that there may be all manner of kindly intercourse between them and the higher ranks (as far as other circumstances will permit), in this country as in others, after a real and effectual, instead of merely illusory, security against the want of the first necessities of life, shall have been provided for them by law ; and therefore, that Dr

\* See Management of Poor, 2d ed., p. 68. Reply to Mr Monypenny, p. 14—17, and 53—56. Reply to Mr Milne in 2d Report of Association, p. 41—47. Illustrations of the Scottish System, &c. p. 46.

Chalmers' apprehensions, "that any assimilation to the Poor-Law of England would undermine the foresight and industry of our labourers, the mutual obligations of kindred, the duties and affinities of social life, and the spontaneous benevolence of the upper classes," have no foundation in experience.

Of all this chain of evidence, Dr Chalmers takes no notice whatever ; but he adduces the testimony of Dr Easton of Kirriemuir (p. 321), to prove that in his parish there had been much kindly intercourse and much assistance given by neighbours, as well as relatives, to sick and disabled persons ;—certainly very creditable to the inhabitants of that parish, but by no means peculiar to them, being exactly similar to what is seen in many other country districts, I believe in every Christian country ; nay, even to a great extent among the most worthless inhabitants of great towns, certainly in situations where the management of the poor is widely different. But, it is stated, that when assessments were introduced, many of the poor became, according to his observation, careless and inattentive to their friends and neighbours in sickness and adversity. On this I would observe, that it is very possible, that in that and many other parishes, when a new mode of raising the parochial funds was introduced, and made subject of discussion, the people might form unreasonable expectations ; that their notions of their duty might be somewhat unsettled, and that these evils would appear in a very prominent view to one who had (as he himself states) been much opposed to the change, and predicted evil consequences from it. But can these results be justly characterized as "irremediable and innumerable evils," or can they be put in competition with the present miseries and permanent consequences of unrelieved destitution, such as is admitted on all hands to be common

in Scotland? It seems to me perfectly clear that, by the exercise of a little patience and discretion on the part of their superiors, it may be made manifest to the people of Kirriemuir, that, by a new supply of parochial funds, their duties to their relations and friends are not changed, although the kind of assistance of which these stand chiefly in need may not be the same as formerly; and that when this is understood, the same kindness of feeling will exist, although the mode of displaying it may be somewhat altered. At least, if this result does not follow, it will be very little to the credit of the spiritual instructors of the people of that parish, because it is quite certain, that in very many other parishes, some in other parts of Scotland, many in England, Holland, and Germany, &c., a much better legal provision against destitution than that described at Kirriemuir, is practically found to coexist with a very exemplary state of family and social affections.

A few instances of this, the more valuable as taken from the works of an author who thinks (I believe incorrectly) that the English Poor-Law has an unfavourable effect upon the virtues of the poor, may be added here. "The poor (in London) constantly give to one another when in distress. They pawn their goods for one another. They frequently share their last morsel and cup of tea with one more forlorn and destitute than themselves. They take each other into their rooms when they are without lodging, with less than a bare chance of ever being remunerated. They almost invariably repay loans that have been guaranteed by their poor neighbours, and feel it as high an obligation as any wealthy British merchant. In sickness, they bestow attention and comfort, almost beyond what money can purchase." "A great proportion of the number of maid-servants in London send two or three guineas out

of their wages annually to their relations in the country.” (Bosanquet on the Rights of the Poor, &c., p. 118, *et seq.*) The following is the account given by Mr Kenrick, of Pontypool in Monmouthshire, of the social and domestic virtues of the miners and iron-workers of that district. “If I sought for some of the highest qualities of the Christian character, I should find them in the family circle of this class. I have known these men practise the greatest self-denial, and acknowledge their duty of assisting their fellow-workmen, and readily perform it. There is a great deal of kindness among the workmen to one another in sickness and suffering. A woman will sit for nights by a neighbour’s bedside to attend upon her, and perform her own household duties in the day. A woman will take the child of another who is badly off, and bring it up as her own,—in many cases where she is herself burdened with five or six children. Is a person sick and his mind ill at ease? In the absence of the minister, an elder of his chapel, or a neighbour, will come to pray by his bedside, and offer him the consolations of religion. Has a person met with an accident at the furnaces? his fellow-workmen will make a subscription of two, three, or even five pounds, for his support during illness.”—(*Ib.* p. 180.)

“At the time of the severe distress at Spitalfields in 1816, an examination took place, and it was found that in the schools of that neighbourhood, there were more than 70 orphans, who, on the death of their parents, had been taken into their houses *by the poor*, and been supported by them.”—(*Ib.* p. 183.)

This last fact is quoted from Dr Chalmers himself; and such facts might surely have convinced him, that there was nothing in the state of matters described at Kirriemuir either unusual in itself, or incompatible with the existence of a compulsory legal provision.

If farther evidence be required in proof of what I have here said, I would beg to refer to the account, quoted by Dr Chalmers himself in his Appendix (p. 330), of the condition and management of the poor in Prussia, where “the whole country is divided into small districts, never containing more than 1500 inhabitants. In villages the management of the funds for the relief of the poor resides in the mayor and some of the principal inhabitants; in towns they are under a board of directors. These individuals *are required* to find out and verify the condition of the poor of their own districts.” It is stated, indeed, that the funds are raised only by donations and private charity, each proprietor of a town, and each inhabitant of a floor or apartment, being in turn visited (the latter generally every month) by some member of the sub-committee of the direction. But it is added, “Every proprietor of an estate, and every town and village, *is bound to provide* for those belonging to them. Should a proprietor, or a community, not fulfil this obligation, *they are compelled to do so*; but this is seldom necessary.” Again, “*the pauper knows that aid must be given when necessary; and he applies to the proper authority for it when not duly afforded.*” “In general, however, neither the party called on for assistance, nor those requiring it, inclines to let the authority interfere.” (P. 331.) It is not distinctly stated here what the authority is, which is thus empowered to enforce the law; but Mr Senior has elsewhere observed, that in all parts of Germany the laws for the relief of the poor are strictly and uniformly enforced; and that the actual intervention of the law should be seldom required is easily conceived, because in all cases where it is distinctly understood that a compulsory power is in readiness, the occasions for its exercise will not be numerous.

I beg it may be observed, therefore, that the system

of management of the poor in Prussia,—which is acknowledged on all hands to work well and beneficially, and to include a thorough inspection and investigation of all cases requiring assistance,—*works under the authority and control of the law*; which is not a dead letter, but is uniformly enforced, in this as in other parts of Germany.

To Dr Chalmers' argument it would be necessary to shew, not that this system is good (as he seems to think it), but that it is *incurably bad*, because connected with the law; containing in it “an admixture of what is vile,” and “therefore pregnant with a thousand evils.” But I am entitled to refer to it, as a striking proof of the compatibility and harmony of the moral management which Dr Chalmers recommends, with the legal security for that management, which I think essential to its success;—an example of the parochial system (or a system in its machinery exactly similar) working admirably well under the sanction and control of the civil power; and, as I believe, working much the better—more equitably towards the rich, and more securely towards the poor,—because armed with the authority, and administered with the uniformity, of the law.

If the heritors and kirk-session of Kirriemuir, or of any other parish in Scotland, wish to raise the funds for the relief of their poor in the same manner as is done in Prussia, I have never contemplated any law which should *compel* them to resort to assessments, although I think they will act wisely and justly in doing so; but I am clearly of opinion that they should be compelled, by permitting an appeal to an accessible court of law, to make *adequate provision* for their poor; and that they ought not to be judges, *without appeal*, of the amount of provision which is to be held to be adequate. They, or some of their number, may be of that class of philosophers who teach, that “if a few aged and helpless persons, from neglect

or oversight, die of want, *it is of no importance, or rather it is an advantage*, for the example of such, *left to perish*, would tend more to reformation than the most pathetic discourse from the pulpit." These words are not adapted to the taste of the present age ; but I have seen too many proofs, that the spirit which dictated them is not extinct in Scotland. We have been told, very recently, and in a work recommended by Dr Chalmers as " a composition of great merit," that there ought to be no provision against " eventual starvation" in the case of the innocent children of intemperate parents ; and in my humble opinion it is at least as necessary for the legislature to guard against the evils which this spirit engenders, as against any excess or misapplication of charity. When I applied, some time since, to the authorities of a country parish for assistance for a poor woman, deserted by her husband, and in extreme destitution, with three children (two of whom have since died in consequence of hardships and privations), I received an answer refusing relief (on grounds which I am assured are doubtful, but which could not be questioned except in the Court of Session), complimenting me on my exertions, but expressing surprise that I could interest myself about " such worthless objects." In a similar case of desertion, where the mother and several children were dangerously ill, and one had died, we are told by Mr Scott, session-clerk at Peterhead, that the kirk-session of the parish to which the family belonged refused relief, on the ground that " the parties, on account of the character of the man" (who had deserted them), " were not considered proper objects for sessional relief." Mr Gemmell, superintendent of the poor in Dumfries, tells us, that " the only anxiety ever shewn about orphan and pauper children there, was to get them off the roll to lessen the expenditure ;" and, I am afraid, nearly the

same thing may be said, at least as to many such cases, in this and many other towns. These are practical illustrations of the principle of "leaving out the undeserving poor," or "cutting off the 'dissipated and unworthy,' without exception," which Dr Chalmers, and many others in Scotland, no doubt with the best intentions, recommend.

Now it is true that of the children thus "left out" of parochial relief (whether from tenderness to the rate-payers, or abhorrence at the vices of their parents), very few die of actual starvation ; because they are supported and protected by some of the "dissipated and undeserving poor," who are excluded along with them. But here I would ask two questions, *first*, Whether "the love of God, and of those whom he has made," dwells more in those who harbour and protect such destitute children, or in those who decline to "provide against their eventual starvation?" *Secondly*, What is to be expected as to the future habits and conduct of children thus thrown loose on society? "The world is not their friend, nor the world's law." Can it be expected that they will respect the law? The answers to these questions appear to me to be very simple ; and on them I found the opinion, that the principle in question is morally sinful, and politically injurious.

I beg it may be observed, then, that so far from doubting the excellence of the parochial system recommended by Dr Chalmers, I sincerely hope that an approximation to it, at least, may sooner or later become general throughout the country. But I greatly doubt the practicability of establishing it, on the purely voluntary principle, in such perfection as to answer the purpose even of a uniform and effectual inspection of the poor all over the country. Even if it were established according to his



wish, I deny its sufficiency for the purpose of relief; and, at all events, I utterly deny its incompatibility, and, on the contrary, assert its perfect harmony, and beneficial co-operation, with such a legal provision as I have taken upon me to recommend. Unless the administrator of public charity is supplied with adequate funds, independently of his own solicitation, made responsible for their application to cases requiring relief, and provided with the means of checking or repressing misconduct at the same time that he relieves suffering, I am thoroughly persuaded that he will very often tire of his task, or *leave it imperfectly done*; and that we shall always have, as at present in Scotland, a great mass of destitution and misery which the public provision never reaches. With the assistance of an accessible authority, enforcing an effective and uniform *law* for the relief of destitution, I think the parochial system of superintendence and management of the poor may flourish in Scotland, not, indeed, to the extent contemplated by Dr Chalmers, but to good and useful purposes. But without habitual assistance from the law, to provide the necessary funds, to enforce the necessary attention, to define the proper objects of relief, and secure against its misapplication, I confess that I have no hope of seeing the poor of Scotland provided for more uniformly and more effectually than they are at this moment.

I would next request the reader to observe, that Dr Chalmers' objection is not to assessments for the relief of destitution generally, but only to assessments for the relief of certain kinds of destitution. He devotes a section of his appendix to proofs of the "wisdom and safety of public charities for the relief of disease;" and he says more explicitly, in reference to Ireland, that he would "provide to the uttermost for all the disease which can

best be treated in public institutions—such as infirmaries, and fever hospitals, and asylums for the dumb and blind, and lunatics ; and that not only as places of cure, but as places of comfort and perpetual harbourage to the incurables ;”—although he would “ leave out” the case of general indigence from the interference of the legislature. (P. 178.)

The reason which he gives for this distinction is, that “ a provision for disease, however conspicuous, will not add one instance of distress to the already existing catalogue ; but a provision for general indigence, if regular and proclaimed, will be counted on, and be sure to multiply its own objects, *to create, in fact, more of general want than it supplies.*” (P. 308.)

I formerly expressed the satisfaction which I felt on finding, at the meeting at Glasgow, that Dr Chalmers still maintained this opinion (which I knew he had formerly expressed) in favour of a fixed and legal provision for certain kinds of destitution. I said that there is a great extent of destitution, very imperfectly relieved in Scotland, which comes strictly under the head of disqualification for labour by disease, and that the principle which Dr Chalmers had stated would justify, or even demand, a vastly greater amount of legal relief to the poor, than had ever yet been granted in Scotland. But I stated the following practical objections, which seem to me insurmountable, to the line of distinction thus attempted to be drawn between the sufferings which ought, and those which ought not, to be admitted to legal relief. And I appeal to any one who has read Dr Chalmers’ late work, whether he has given any satisfactory answer, or any answer whatever, to those practical difficulties.

1. “ If the legal provision is advisable, to relieve the sufferings of those who have been disabled for labour by injury or disease, how can it be justly withheld after

their death, from those who are incapable of labour themselves, and had been dependent on the labour of those, to whom it had been justly given? How can it be justly granted, for example, to a labourer who is struck down by accident or disease in middle life, but *denied to his aged parents whom he had supported, or to the widow and orphans whom he may leave behind him?*

2. "If such provision is justly given to those whom Providence has visited with incurable disease in middle life, how can it be justly withheld from those who are disabled by that visitation of Providence, which the mere advance of years brings upon all (but at very different periods of life, according to the constitutions of individuals, and always in connection with so much of disease as to render its distinction from the disability of disease very often imperceptible); and whom circumstances *quite beyond their own control* had prevented, during their years of labour, from making any provision for their old age—a class who, from the different statements I have given, appear to be very numerous in Scotland?

3. "Many of those who are merely destitute, are so from causes over which they have had as little control as over the dispensations of Providence; for example, the failure of any particular line of industry, in consequence of improvements in art—the glut of markets—commercial embarrassments from failure of banks or other establishments—or the general increase of population. In equity, destitution from such causes is equally entitled to a certain relief, as disability from accident or disease.

4. On the other hand, many of those who are disabled by disease, or even by accident, have brought these misfortunes on themselves by imprudence or intemperance. It may be plausibly maintained, that these have as little claim, in equity, on charitable assistance, as those who have lost employment by misconduct, and less than those who have lost it by misfortune; but it is *impossible* prac-

tically to distinguish, how much of disease is to be ascribed to intemperance, and how much to the visitations of Providence only, causes of both kinds very generally co-operating.

5. "Even if all destitution, independent of disease, were referable to misconduct, this misconduct cannot be ascribed to the children or other dependents of those who become destitute ; and if no security is given for their relief, great numbers of innocent persons are unjustly punished for the sins of a much smaller number of guilty.

"While these considerations shew, that the line by which the legal provision is to be circumscribed cannot, consistently with *justice*, be drawn in the way recommended, the *inexpediency* of excluding destitution, independently of disease, from participation in its benefits, becomes more obvious when we consider another admission distinctly made by Dr Chalmers, that the representation given by myself and others, of the rapid progress of population among persons reduced to a destitute and degraded mode of life, is a true statement. If this be so, the denial of a fixed and certain relief to destitution, from whatever cause it proceeds, must necessarily tend to an increase of the evil ; the sin of neglecting the duty of charity is thus visited to the third and fourth generation of those who have committed it ; and the practical question is reduced to that which I have always stated as the true object of the inquiry, viz., under what regulations is it found by *experience*, that the sufferings and the evil consequences of destitution, are most effectually and permanently controlled."—*Illustrations*, p. 44–5.

I am particularly anxious that the difference of opinion between Dr Chalmers and myself on this last point should be distinctly understood, because the really practical question at issue depends entirely upon it.

Dr Chalmers not only fully admits the effect of desti-

tution, and consequent degradation of the habits of the people, in *fostering population*, but quotes very striking passages from Malthus, to shew that he also was aware of the effect of extreme wretchedness, to ‘destroy the checks upon increased population from reason and foresight.’ ‘*The most constant and best-directed efforts will almost invariably be found among a class above that of the wretchedly poor.*’ ‘Poverty when it has passed certain limits almost ceases to operate, and the desire of immediate gratification, where extreme wretchedness prevails, *may prompt almost universally to early marriages;*’ (p. 241)—quotations which prove—what I formerly explicitly stated—that all the different checks on the principle of population had been rightly apprehended by Mr Malthus; and that he went wrong only (as a passage which I formerly quoted shews that in his latter years he had himself begun to suspect) in his judgment of the manner in which those checks are affected by a legal provision for the poor.

It is to be observed, therefore, that Dr Chalmers is quite aware of the danger of inadequately relieved destitution causing extreme improvidence, and thereby multiplying itself. Why, then, is he so anxious to *leave out general indigence* “from the benefits of a legal provision for the relief of suffering?” The reason is given by himself, and is the same as I formerly considered at length. “A provision for general indigence, if regulated and proclaimed, will be counted on,—and be sure to multiply its own objects,—to *create, in fact, more of general want than it supplies.*” (P. 308.) Therefore, admitting the tendency of unrelieved destitution to multiply itself, he maintains that the tendency of destitution relieved by the law to multiply itself, is *still greater*; and this is the main ground of his opposition to it; and certainly a very fair and sufficient ground, if the fact were as he states it.

On this point I join issue with him. I admit that there is a danger of legal relief being made indiscriminate, and then multiplying the objects of charity ; but I maintain that this danger is comparatively slight, and that by a little prudence and management it may be surmounted without difficulty. On the other hand I assert, that in a country advanced in civilization, where the rich and the poor are much separated, there is always *extreme danger* of destitution, unrelieved by the law, being very inadequately provided for by any voluntary efforts of the higher ranks,—and of this imperfectly relieved destitution (*according to the admitted principle*) rapidly extending itself.

The question thus being as to the comparative degree, and the comparative facility of avoiding, these different dangers (both of which are admitted to exist), how is it to be decided ? I answer in one word, *by Experience* ; and Dr Chalmers has himself pointed out in what manner experience may be most easily applied to the question. “ There is no mistaking the fact of a higher standard of enjoyment in one country than another ; in virtue of which there obtains a stronger preventive check, in the way of too early and too frequent marriages, which, by its effect on population and wages, insures a favourable state of the labour-market, &c. The larger demand for the comforts and respectabilities of life tells as a restraint on improvident marriages.” (P. 194.) And he then goes on to contrast England with Ireland as to the standard of comfort which is general among the peasantry of both ; very strangely, as I think, not perceiving, that this example is fatal to his doctrine. As he seems to have repeatedly misapprehended my argument on this point, I must enter on a short explanation.

He is no doubt quite right in saying, that we are not entitled to regard the poor-rate as the cause of the su-

rior civilization of England. But it was distinctly pointed out to him at Glasgow, that I had expressly guarded myself against being supposed to make that inference. I expressly said that I entered into no political discussions on the *cause* of the prosperity of England, or the poverty of Ireland.\* I only appealed to the experience of the two countries for an answer to the question proposed above, Whether destitution openly relieved by the law, or destitution for which there is no legal relief, has the greater tendency to multiply and extend itself? This is the only question, illustrated by the comparative history of these countries, which concerns us in the present discussion; and on this question it still appears to me, that the example has all the force of the *instantia crucis*. I do not ask for an extension of the legal provision in Scotland, because England has prospered under a poor-law (although I believe the poor-law to have been an important element in her prosperity); but I ask for it as the simplest, surest, and speediest method of giving relief to the extreme sufferings that we see around us in Scotland; and then I refer to the experience of England, as contrasted with that of Ireland, in proof that the danger of the legal provision "multiplying the objects of charity" cannot be such as Dr Chalmers supposes; on the contrary, that it has, when administered with common prudence, a directly opposite effect. If "the effect of a provision for general indigence, regulated and proclaimed," had been, as Dr Chalmers asserts, "to create more of general want than it supplies," it could not possibly have happened, that in England, where such a provision has existed for above 200 years, and was carried to an injudicious extent for nearly fifty years, the population, as proportioned to the demand for labour, notwithstanding an enormous im-

\* See *Management of the Poor in Scotland*, &c., 2d edition, p. 48.

migration from Ireland, had made so little progress, that the Commissioners of Inquiry who drew up the Report on which the Poor-Law Amendment Act was founded, thought themselves justified in stating the results of their investigation as follows :—“ There were dangerous congestions of pauperism in particular places, *but no real or general surplus, beyond the average demand for employment throughout the year.*”\*

Again, if this “regulated and proclaimed provision against general indigence” had necessarily increased idleness, immorality, and crime, it never could have happened that the English labourers, living under that system, should (as Mr Senior, certainly no blind admirer of the system, himself tells us) have excelled in industry those of all other countries in Europe ; that they should have been, as I am confident may be proved, and as Mr Nicholls and many others testify, more temperate in their habits than either the Scotch or Irish ; and lastly, that according to the statements of experienced observers, the Irish (a small but unprotected portion of the population in England) should have furnished a great majority of the known thieves.†

I shall here annex a few sentences from a communication from a friend in England, as to the provision for the poor, and their condition, in one of the agricultural districts of Yorkshire :—“ The overseer informs me that a widow with young children is generally allowed from 5s. to 6s. a-week, *i. e.* from 6d. to 9d. a-head for the children, and from 2s. 6d. to 3s. for herself,—the relief being gradually reduced as the children are able to earn something for themselves. The mother, in addition, is

\* See an article on the Poor-Law Amendment Act. Reprinted from the Edinburgh Review, p. 15.

† See First Report of Association for obtaining an Official Inquiry into Pauperism in Scotland, p. 5.



probably able to earn something herself by out-door work. From 2s. 6d. to 3s. a-head is allowed by the parish to the aged, and during sickness some slight addition either in money or in kind." Here is a liberal provision for *general indigence*, which has been going on for centuries, "regulated and proclaimed," and which, on Dr Chalmers's principle, must have "been counted on, and been *sure* to multiply its own objects, and create more of general want than it supplies." But how stands the fact, as to the population, the demand for labour, the condition of the working classes, and the extent of destitution? "There is *very little* pauperism in this country. The *population is not large*, the necessaries of life are of reasonable price, the wants of the people are few. An able-bodied labourer gains from 10s. to 12s. a-week throughout the year; the average yearly earnings of a woman in husbandry employment are from L.10 to L.11. When hired by the year, house-rent, if there is a family, is paid by the master, and, with the addition of the wife's earnings, the income is comfortable. Their food consists of potatoes, bacon, and a small portion of fresh meat, got for the Sunday's dinner. There is generally half a rood of land attached to each tenement, or the farmer allows a small quantity of land for potatoes." It is true that this is in an agricultural district, where the demand for labour is steady, but it is also in a country where there is an effective provision against destitution, and such a law of settlement as would have enabled any other district to send back and fix on its source the "general want," if it had really existed, which had been here created. From all that I have seen or learned, I believe this to be a fair representation of the general state of the native population in many districts of England, in which the Poor Laws

have not been abused, or their abuses corrected;\* and therefore I believe that the opinion of a “regulated and proclaimed provision for general indigence, creating more of general want than it supplies,” is a mistake; and that the idea, that we in Scotland know better how to manage the poor than our neighbours in England, is a prejudice.

I have not, however, trusted to the fact as to England only, but have shewn that it is a general fact, so far as any information I have been able to obtain goes, that the standard of comfort is higher, and the pressure of population on subsistence is less, in all those countries of Europe where there is an effective legal provision for the poor, than in those where general indigence is trusted to private charity; and I still invite the comparison in this respect, of England, Holland, Germany, and the German parts of Switzerland, with Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, or Savoy: or, to come nearer home, of Berwickshire, where the poor rate is the heaviest in Scotland, with the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, where it is a dead letter. I invite also a comparison of the habits and standard of comfort of pauper children, dependent on the law in England, with beggar children, dependent on voluntary charity in Ireland or Scotland; and I would then ask, whether *experience* has not sufficiently decided, that the danger of multiplication of destitution, from reliance on a proclaimed and regulated provision, is trifling in comparison of the danger, admitted by Dr Chalmers to exist, from the inadequately relieved sufferings, which have hitherto been always found under the merely voluntary system of relief.

\* See, *e.g.* the Evidence as to Norfolk and Suffolk and Sussex, Second Report of Association, p. 37. Also, Management of Poor in Scotland, pp. 29, 48, *et seq.*

If Dr Chalmers supposes that he can establish a new era in this department of human affairs, and induce men to do voluntarily and uniformly in Scotland, for the good of the poor, what they are certainly not doing now, and I believe never have done, in any country equally advanced in civilization, I beg to remind him once more of his own statements as to the "cruel neglect and abandonment of the poor by the higher ranks," as to the "most tenacious resistance of the land-owners" to his plans for the improvement of the poor, and as to his "weary and ineffectual struggle of twenty-five years with the public functionaries in Scotland;" and I beg to remind my readers, that in all that I have proposed on this subject, I have been anxious to "speak as a man of this world," equally aware of the selfishness and negligence of many of the higher ranks, as of the immorality and perverseness of many of the lower; and have recommended nothing which does not appear to me to have been found, by *experience*, attainable in a country which may lay claim to an *average* proportion of right principle and Christian feeling. More than this, in works of charity, we certainly cannot claim for Scotland.

Dr Chalmers repeats the statement which he had made in Glasgow, as to the better condition of the poor in the north of England than in the south, ascribing it, as he did then, to the more lavish expenditure of the poor-rates in the south (p. 200); altogether overlooking the fact, which was fully stated and explained to him in Glasgow, that the expenditure of poor-rates, for all the purposes to which they are now applied in England, or to which any one ever wished that they should be applied in Scotland, *has never been more lavish* in the south than in the north of England. "The allowance to aged and disabled persons, and to widows and orphans, and the extension of the right of relief to able-

bodied poor in workhouses, have been long, and are now, *as liberal in the north of England as in the south*; the reason of the great difference of expenditure formerly having been that, in the south, a great part of the *wages of labour* of able-bodied persons were paid out of the poor-rates, which abuse never existed in the north, and which no one proposes for Scotland." In fact, however, I believe, it is not the condition of the people that is better in the north than the south of England, but the pressure on the rate-payer that is less.

But I am accused of "special pleading," in the references which I have made to the practice of other countries in regard to the management of the poor; and it is stated that, from the same volume (Appendix F. to First Report of Poor-Law Commissioners) from which I have drawn evidence of the safety and utility of a legal provision for the poor, Mr Bosanquet, in his recent work, entitled "The Rights of the Poor and Christian Almsgiving illustrated," has made a series of "most impressive extracts," having the opposite tendency. This requires a little explanation.

I beg to say, that I looked through that volume with the view of collecting facts, rather than opinions; and expressed both regret and surprise that the queries sent to the government-agents (looking to the statistics of *pauperism* only, not of *destitution*) did not elicit as many facts as were desirable, as to the degree of suffering, or the usual standard of comfort, actually existing among the people. The points to which I directed my attention in the answers to the queries circulated in the different countries, were the statements of facts as to the general age of marriage among the poor, and as to the habits of industry and frugality generally perceptible among them; because these are the points obviously illustrating the question of the effect of one or

other mode of provision for the poor, on the standard of comfort and the principle of population, which I have always maintained to be the turning point of the whole discussion.

Mr Bosanquet has made no quotations from this volume which seem to me in the smallest degree to invalidate my statements as to these points ; but he has directed his attention almost exclusively to the evidence here afforded as to the family and social affections of the poor in different countries ; and because he finds it stated (repeatedly, though neither uniformly nor exclusively), that the poor are kind and hospitable to one another, that great exertions are often made for the relief of relatives, and that few or none are known to die of want, in those countries where there is no legal provision for the poor, he concludes, very rashly, as I think, that these are countries deserving of imitation in this respect.\* He does not advert to the fact, that there is no account, in these descriptions, of the *actual degree of destitution*, or of the *usual standard of comfort*, observed among the people. I believe there is no country,

\* I believe that in regard to one, at least, of six countries to which Mr B. here refers, viz., Venice, he is mistaken in supposing that there is no compulsory legal provision. According to the statement of Sir W. Money, a part of the funds applied to the support of the poor is raised by taxation in the town, and a part also in other parts of the Austrian dominions ; and I believe that the regular inspection and relief of the poor there, as elsewhere under the Austrian rule, are not trusted to voluntary charitable dispositions, but *made imperative* on clergymen and others. "Every commune in the Venetian provinces is *bound* to support its own poor," and its own poor are defined by a law of settlement by ten years' residence. It is not expressly said, but I presume it may safely be inferred, that this law extends to the town as well as the provinces. So also, the collection of funds by domiciliary visits, being made under the authority of government, and by leading men in the State, has, in that despotic country, as Mr Turnbull states, "all the force of a compulsory enactment." (See App. F to First Report of Poor-Law Commissioners, p. 663.)

certainly no Christian country, in which such examples of social affection do not frequently occur, as may furnish pleasing descriptions ; and it is easy to perceive, that the exercise of these virtues will appear the most striking, where the destitution is the greatest. But I have elsewhere given sufficient evidence, that he is quite mistaken in asserting, that, in these countries, the rich are never wanting in their alms, “which expand and contract, and form and fit themselves to every necessity and occasion ;” or in supposing that the *condition* of the poor is one of comfort. No one can travel through any of these countries without perceiving that this description is no more generally applicable there, than in the wilds of Ireland, or the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. If the absence of known cases of death by actual starvation, and the presence of numerous examples of charitable deeds of the poor towards one another, are to be accounted sufficient proofs of a well regulated state of the poor, then is not only the condition of the poor in the Highlands and Islands, and in most parts of Ireland, but their condition and their conduct among the most profligate of the inhabitants of our great towns—among those who are “left out” of Dr Chalmers’ scheme of relief—worthy of all praise ; for it is quite certain that very few cases of death by mere starvation, and very numerous cases of life preserved by the care and kindness and disinterested exertions of neighbours and friends, are to be found in all these situations.

“ In the prison of Bristol,” at one time, “ the criminals had a very scanty allowance, and the debtors none at all, but what they derived from their neighbours or casual charity. It happened that these resources failed to the debtors, but *the criminals*, compassionating their destitution, shared their own insufficient allowances with them, and no death by starvation occurred.” (Bosanquet.)

Those who are not aware that such good qualities and such virtuous actions frequently co-exist with debasement and profligacy of character, do not understand human nature ; they do not know, what is nevertheless strictly true, that “ degrade man as you will, you cannot efface the image and superscription which he bears.”

I have given formerly, I think, quite enough of evidence, partly from this author himself, to prove that the English poor are by no means generally deficient in social and domestic virtues ; and again, that the poor of other countries, where there is no such security against destitution, present very numerous cases of heartless abandonment of parents, children, or other relations. Indeed I cannot understand how Mr Bosanquet, after the evidence he has himself given of the domestic and social virtues common among the English poor,—and after his general assertion, that “ the alms which they give are greater in amount, and are a perfect shame to their richer neighbours,”—can feel justified in the assertion, that “ the habits and principles (as to social affections) observed among the poor in countries where there is no fixed provision, are almost unknown in this country.”\* But all that concerns us just now is to remark, that the existence and striking exemplification of these virtues in countries where there is no legal relief, affords no contradiction whatever to my statement, that the *condition* of the poor in those countries is miserable, and their habits often profligate, and always degraded and improvident, incapable of improvement under the present system, and tending continually to a reproduction of the same evils.

Notwithstanding what I have now stated, I am so far from thinking the work of Mr Bosanquet generally

\* The Rights of the Poor and Christian Almsgiving vindicated, p. 265.

opposed to the views which I have taken upon me to express, that I regard it as an effective auxiliary ; because the greater part of that work is occupied in inculcating the duty of a large and liberal charity, and encouraging a kindly spirit of sympathy with the poor. I heartily concur in the praise which Dr Chalmers has bestowed on the spirit in which this work is written. It contains, however, a little of that exaggeration of feeling which is perhaps unavoidable, when a man, accustomed to the refinements of life, endeavours to picture to himself the sufferings of the poor. Great as these sufferings are, and heinous as I cannot but think the sin of inattention to them among the higher ranks of most countries, yet “ Heaven tempers the breeze to the shorn lamb ;” and it is equally a mistake to suppose a life even of abject destitution to be bereft of all enjoyment, as to suppose it necessarily unadorned by any of the better feelings of humanity. But the provision of Nature by which this alleviation of misery is effected consists essentially in this, that those who are once habituated to this mode of life, “ look neither before nor after ;” their whole energies are exerted on the supply of their daily wants, and their thoughts dwell neither on the past nor the future. It is unreasonable to expect that, in such a state of mind, temptations to any vicious indulgences which may be placed within their reach, can be generally or firmly resisted. As their merriment of to-day is no proof that their sufferings of yesterday were not intense,—so their sufferings of to-day teach them no lessons of temperance or prudence for to-morrow ; and thus those dispositions of mind, resulting from their destitution, which make their own miseries tolerable, seem destined by Nature to make those miseries a permanent visitation on the sins of their superiors.

To these considerations I think Mr Bosanquet has



not sufficiently adverted ; but his work exhibits a faithful representation of destitution and misery, such as exist more or less in all large communities,—but, as I maintain, to by far the greatest extent, and with the least alleviation, in those which are practically devoid of the legal provision. I would particularly request attention to his just and repeated descriptions of the infinite *variety* of character and circumstances, and causes of misfortune, to be found among the destitute poor ; and would ask any one who attends to them, whether he thinks they can be fairly and equitably arranged by any human wisdom, into the two great divisions, of the *deserving*, who are to be selected as the objects of voluntary relief, and the *undeserving*, who are to be *kept at bay*.

I shall subjoin a few extracts from this work in confirmation of two important points which I formerly endeavoured to illustrate, and wish to keep before the eye of the public, and on which this author speaks obviously from ample experience,—the gross exaggeration of the evil qualities of the poor, in which many recent writers have indulged ; and the multitude of causes of destitution existing in a great community, which are, either entirely or in a great measure, independent of vice or intemperance.

He quotes the following passage from the work of W. A. Miles, Esq., entitled *Poverty, Mendicity, and Crime*.

“ The nucleus of crime in St Giles’s, consists of about six streets, riddled with courts, alleys, passages, and dark entries, all leading to rooms and smaller tenements, crowded with a population existing in all the filth attendant upon improvidence, crime, and profligacy, as if the inhabitants, by common consent, deem themselves only ‘ tenants-at-will,’ till the gallows or the hulks should require them.”

On this Mr Bosanquet observes,

“ There are multitudes in the district here mentioned, earning a hard but honest livelihood ; and there is no part of it which may

not be visited by the clergy, or by any other person on a charitable errand, with perfect safety."

Again, Mr Miles hazards the general assertion,—

"Beggars live well; have hot beef-steaks and beer for breakfast; fare well at night, and are never poor."

"Cadgers never eat broken food; they take it and sell it. They live on the best of every thing, and drink hard; after food, all the surplus goes in drinking."

Here he states, in perfect accordance with my experience,—

"*I know* all these to be false, as a *general description*. These classes *suffer intensely*, and with continual privation; though there are exceptions, as to times and to particular individuals, in which there are *occasions of good success* and merriment.

"Without being at all unaware of their faults and infirmities, or desiring to conceal them, my undertaking is to put forth the claims and virtues of the poor. Enough has been written and read of their deformities; I will put forth something respecting their necessities and merits. I will dwell upon these; the rest I will acknowledge.

"A large proportion of those who allow the existence of poverty, are ready to say confidently, it is all their own fault; that no one in this rich and prosperous country *can* be in distress unless they are either fools or idle. Or others will say, it is want of education which causes it; or it must be their own worthless character, and that they ought not to be encouraged, for that they deserve it. And such persons' conduct towards the poor will be according to their language, as much as that of those who take every beggar to be a cheat and impostor. All these causes do operate, each to some extent, but a very small error in the degree and the comparison may operate in practice so as to produce a great and gross injustice, in the conduct resulting from it.

"The numbers whom distress of mind and wretchedness have driven to the use of ardent spirits, for the sake of drowning their miserable thoughts and intolerable reflections, is so great, that it affords a grave doubt whether more persons are driven to poverty by drinking, or by poverty to drunkenness.

"The Vestry-clerk of St Giles's made a return to the Rector of Bloomsbury of 170 drunkards in the workhouse. It appeared that of these, two to one at least had become drinkers from poverty, and only one in three were poor from being drunkards.

"Neither idleness, nor vice, nor the unequal division of property, nor want of education, nor all these together, nor a hundred more than these, are the causes of all the poverty which exists; no one can tell, or ascertain, or guess at, all the causes from which poverty arises. Every such pretension must be defeated by the next day's investigation; and any general rules by which

we may bind ourselves must work injustice, and will be more and more defeated by a wider and more impartial experience. ‘The poor shall never cease out of the land;’ and if all the present causes were provided against, still would God, in his own way, and by his own means, fulfil his own decree, which was given for our use; and still must it ever be the duty of the rich to keep the poor and poverty continually under their eye—to look upon it, to acquaint themselves with, and minister to it.”

“The manufacturing classes in towns, and artizans of most kinds, are much more *subject to disease* than the agricultural population; and there are many employments in themselves unhealthy, and *diseases peculiar to particular trades or callings*.

“Again, let any one who has a family calculate what the necessary food and clothing of a single child costs him, and multiply this by six or ten, remembering that a poor child requires no less nourishment than a rich one, and that one of the most economical kinds of food is the best bread,—and say how it is possible for ten, or even six children, to be maintained with food, clothing, lodging, washing, and firing, on 10s. a week in the country, and 20s. in towns, barring accidents. Let him next say how much may be saved, in these circumstances, against accidents and illnesses. If he should fail in this attempt, he must then admit that there may be cases of distress, without culpability, among those who have *large families of children*.

“*Women deserted by their husbands* are frequently burdened with a young and increasing family, and are brought to their distress by a more sudden and heart-breaking calamity than even death itself.

“An ordinary term of *old age* may perhaps be provided against. But when old age is protracted, and exceeds the usual limits, and especially when it has been preceded by illness or widowhood, or other distressing circumstances, any reasonable provision must be expected to fail; and the case is similar to that of illness or accident in early life, before there has been any opportunity of saving. Old age is a more frequent cause of distress among women, particularly widows, and the distresses of these must be less culpable. It is the husband’s province to make provision; and it has often been his crime or neglect which has occasioned the widow’s want of ability.

“*Want of employment* operates to create distress much more extensively than is at all known or believed.

“The greatest and most to be lamented depreciation is in the labour of *women*. A woman can scarcely support herself by ordinary and regular labour, much less can she maintain her children if she be left a widow. At the more refined sorts of work, those who happen to have the skill and the employment also, may provide for themselves tolerably; but the number which can obtain work of these kinds is comparatively few indeed.

“Spinning is now given to a woman, ever so able and willing

to work, as a positive charity, for it cannot be made profitable. Young and old women remain at home idle, from the actual valuelessness of their labour. Women's skill and strength is depreciated down to being a superfluity and a burden; by which they are not only deprived of support, but are more and more degraded. The grade of female understanding and skill which is in requisition, is so low, that the sense of children best answers to the standard.

" But the most urgent and painful of all distresses, occasioned by want of employment, is that of young girls, maid-servants *out of place*. The distresses and helplessness of this class of people exceed all that could be reckoned upon, without actual experience. When young women are brought up from the country, and are far distant from their friends, who have little means of assisting them, —or, what is also frequently the case, have no friends at all in the world,—if they happen to lose their situations from their own folly, or necessity, or illness, or, what is quite as common, from the caprice of their mistresses,—they have no resource whatever, unless they happen to get another place before the little remains of their wages is expended. Mistresses frequently exercise the most culpable thoughtlessness and severity with regard to their maid-servants. They turn them off from mere capriciousness, or for a trivial error, and for a slight cause will refuse to give them a character; though, with the best of characters, they may often be a long time out of place. Nothing can exceed the rapid descent made by such people from character, comfort, joyousness, and delicacy, to the hungry, haggard, care-worn look, the squalid filth, —to abandoned, helpless, hopeless, reckless misery! Unless the helping hand is extended to them at this very moment, in the next hour they must be ranked with the most degraded of the human race, and sustain all those lowest and most irretrievable depths of misery which have been alluded to.

" The state to which a person is reduced when he has sunk to the condition of having but one suit of clothes, and no change whatever, is miserable beyond description. This is the condition in which numbers of poor creatures exist before they are driven to the workhouse; and quantities of clothes of this sort are burnt at the workhouses to prevent infection. Such people, when washed and clothed, and recovered by wholesome living to a tolerable state of health and strength, are frequently, by this means alone, placed in a situation to gain a livelihood, and to get up again in the world.

" *The loss of a mechanic's tools* leaves a good and active workman entirely destitute. Sometimes these are taken for rent; sometimes they are lost or stolen; most frequently, through illness or the burdens of a large family, they have been sold one by one, or are in deposit at the pawnbroker's. When the employment is offered, then he has no tools to execute it; then, shortly after, he has no clothes sufficient to enable him to go out and seek for it. At length, he has no strength and health to do it, when work of

some inferior description and tools are offered him; and he inevitably sinks to the lowest state of beggary and irrecoverable weakness, unless some one of the Christian school of almsgiving stretches out a helping hand to him in time, supports him from sinking deeper, and gets him restored to health and place again.

“ Though the largest fortunes are made, and the greatest prizes are gained in London, yet the disappointments, too, are greater and more frequent; very tolerable powers may be lost and wasted in this troubled sea of competition and chicanery. A very extensive mass of misery and suffering exists among those whose *abilities are unequal to the high standard* existing and required in London.

“ But there are other causes to be found, among which are the *increased selfishness*, pride, exclusiveness, forgetfulness of duty and responsibility, and other defects of moral character, which are engendered among the higher ranks, by the habits of society in capital towns.

“ One part are engaged in the pursuit of fashion, another of ambition, the most of riches; all are so devoted to the world and mammon, that there is hardly time for the every day duties of life, and personal attentions and sympathies. And least of all can the other classes of society, and the protection which is their due, obtain any thought or adequate attention.

“ It has already been observed, that drunkenness is caused by poverty, as well as being the cause of it. *Other faults of character* are similarly circumstanced. It is a modern theory, that poverty is the chief cause of crime. The same has been said of want of education, with an equal degree of truth. In each case, as is usual, there is a *partial truth and a monstrous exaggeration*. But poverty does nurse crime, and cause those seeds of vice to spring up which are near the surface. *Weakness of mind* peoples a vast field of misery. Infirmary of body and mind, natural inferiority and weakness, places great numbers in a state of difficulty from their birth.

“ Every one conversant with the poor will have found, that there is a large number of persons continually going down. They seem to be born to misery. They meet with more misfortunes, make less advantage of their successes, and of the assistance which they must meet with, than other people. The distresses of some of these are caused by natural infirmity,—of others, by weakness of moral character—a great proportion by the two together.

“ *These cases are not hopeless*; and what is of great concern in our judgment and treatment of the poor, the largest experience cannot determine which of the many cases before it will lead to the most satisfactory results.

“ The misfortunes of life seem to fall heaviest upon the *female sex*. It is the widow, and the deserted wife, and the weak and friendless girl, who is many times oftener the subject of compassion than the other sex. Women are formed to suffer and to en-

dure ; and abundant is the suffering and the endurance to which, in all ages, they have constantly been subject.

“ Women also are born to be a prey. A mixture of strength and weakness, they are impregnable on one side,—having the other sex for their leader and support ; on the other side, they are defenceless and powerless—against the sex upon which they are destined to lean and to depend. All the ways of evil are mysterious, but this is most inscrutable.

“ Disease, starvation, robbery, insanity, early and painful death, murder of children, suicide,—these are among the consequences most frequently to be met with ; and the almost certain forerunner of these is the most abject poverty.

“ The features of poverty are thus *infinitely varied* in character and magnitude. No two cases exactly resemble one another. The gradations are innumerable ; and in order to exhibit a perfectly true picture, it would be necessary to exemplify all these gradations, and the various shades of colour and intensity in this wide landscape of human misery.

“ The cases referred to are, for the most part, urgent cases. I have made choice of these, both because it is requisite that men’s minds should be impressed more strongly than they are with the actual extent of misery, and because they truly exhibit the depths to which a great proportion of the lighter and less urgent cases must fall, if not arrested in their downward course, and *lifted up by charity*.

“ These causes rarely exist alone. On the contrary, those who are unfortunate are, for the most part, subject to a multiplicity of misfortunes ; some to more wonderful accumulations and repetitions of accidents and reverses, than could be believed to be mixed together in the vials of God’s providence.”

The practical object which Mr Bosanquet seems to have in view, so far as his desponding views allow him to anticipate any improvement, is nearly the same as that of Dr Chalmers (except that he professes no intention of “leaving out” a class of undeserving poor, maintaining, on the contrary, as I do, and as is almost universally done in England, that *all* misery is entitled to consolation and relief)—viz. to impress on the minds of the higher ranks of society so strong a sense of the Christian duty which the state of the poor imposes on them, as to induce them to make a liberal and discriminating voluntary provision for them “on the plan of district visiting,” in all parts of the country. On this,

the only observation I would here make is, that it will be time enough to consider how far the relief of destitution may be safely entrusted to this district visiting, when that system shall have become so general as to secure a regular, frequent, humane, and discriminating inspection of the poor, and provide sufficient funds for their effectual relief, with sufficient security against its misapplication, in all parts of the country; of which, I confess, I have not the smallest expectation. *In the mean time*, and while the voluntary system is confessedly and lamentably deficient in all these qualities, it is palpably unjust that the poor should continue to suffer for the negligence of the rich; and therefore I think the same sense of Christian obligation should not only allow us, but bind us, to adopt such other measures as *experience shews to be most effectual*, in giving prompt and adequate relief to as many as possible of the cases of destitution that surround us; and it is on this ground that I have always placed the argument for the extension of the legal provision in Scotland.\*

This is fairly admitted by this author; for he says,—“I do not mean that a poor law is bad, under the circumstances; but I regret the circumstances [*i.e.* the absence of an efficient and systematic plan of voluntary relief, based on religion] which *make it good and necessary*. I do not say that a poor rate is not charity, or that the poor law is not an act of public virtue, and, so far as its objects and provisions have the comfort of the

\* What resource, for example, does the Voluntary System provide for the case, which is, and I believe always will be, a very common one, that of destitution coupled with known immorality, which Mr Bosanquet does not wish to “leave out” of his scheme of charity, and which, as I have shewn, cannot be left out without inhumanity and public injury? The only safe and effectual resource for such a case I believe to be relief, coupled with confinement; for which the Voluntary System certainly makes no adequate provision.

poor for their motive, is not entitled to great respect and praise. Believing firmly, as I do, that the state has a conscience, and that the country must suffer for the acts and sins of its government, I consider that *public alms are a public virtue*, warding off a judgment and a curse, or bringing down a blessing, according to its measure and its motive." (P. 218.)

If Mr Bosanquet had lived in Scotland, and applied the same benevolent spirit of observation to the distresses of the poor, and the same searching scrutiny to the sentiments and acts of the rich, as he has in England, I think he must have perceived, that if an effective poor law "is good and necessary, and an act of public virtue" under present circumstances in England, it is still more so in Scotland; and that the general tone of feeling in regard to the poor must be still more altered with us than there, before such a "practice of voluntary almsgiving" as he wishes to see, giving "*relief and consolation to all descriptions of misery*," can be relied on as a substitute for a legal provision against destitution.

He has himself made some strong observations upon the "vast multitudes of Irish and Scotch wholly without parish relief" in England, though in the greatest distress; on the general abandonment of the Irish as a hopeless case; and on the general rule of the Mendicity Society in London, to allow to them only "food and a single night's lodging, unless in very peculiar emergencies." (P. 136.) Did it never occur to him, that the rich in Ireland and Scotland must sometimes be wanting in their alms, and that their charity cannot "expand and contract, and form and fit itself to every occasion" (as he supposes always to happen where there is no legal provision), when he finds so many natives of these countries living in misery in London, neither relieved by their richer countrymen,



nor willing to return to their own country? And again, that if, by a uniform legal provision, the care of these sufferers could be thrown on their native parishes with the same facility as that of the English poor, it would be much easier for the parochial authorities and the voluntary charities in London to give adequate and discriminating relief to the remaining objects of charity there?

I can by no means concur in the gloomy forebodings of this author as to the state of the body politic in Britain, which he regards as "corrupting and hastening to dissolution," chiefly on account of the neglect of the Christian duty of charity. The representation which he gives of the practical operation of the present English Poor Law is so different from that which I have received from many other quarters, fully worthy of credit, and in some cases myself witnessed, that I cannot help thinking he must have fallen into the same error which he points out so distinctly in others,—generalizing from a small number of cases. There may, no doubt, be "harshness and heartlessness" in the mode of administering the law in many places,—and I have formerly said, that I suspect the powers of magistrates over the guardians of the poor, which afford the natural check on such abuses, formerly too great, have been too much abridged;—but he is certainly inaccurate in saying, that the necessary effect of the present law is "to consign the cripple, the maimed, the halt, the blind, and the paralytic," to a workhouse and exact diet, and to the "same rule as the sturdy beggar, the drunkard, and profligate." (P. 216.) There are many individuals belonging to those classes, to whom the workhouse is the greatest boon that can be offered, and by whom it will be gratefully accepted; but all those classes are comprised in the exceptions to the order for indoor relief; and great numbers of them, in all parts of the country, receive accordingly outdoor

relief at the discretion of the Guardians, and live with their relatives and friends.

I cannot but think it a misrepresentation to say, that a poor law is “based on luxury and disdain,” and is intended only to “get rid of an annoyance and nuisance which vexes us.” (P. 224.) I consider a poor law as based simply on the fact, known by experience, that in an advanced and complex state of society, the obligation of supporting and relieving the poor cannot be performed by many who are willing, and will not by many who are able, in their own persons. The state takes on itself the obligation of charity, just as it takes on itself the obligation of administering justice, and of providing means of national defence; and taxes the people for all these purposes, only because the obligation is recognised as pressing on all,—while the inability to discharge it, in their own persons, is perceived and admitted by the great majority.

I apprehend that public opinion in England has now declared itself unequivocally, and probably finally, against the harsher proceedings which have taken place, or been contemplated, under the Poor-Law Amendment Act, particularly against prohibition of outdoor relief to aged and disabled persons, and widows and orphans; and I do not think this could have happened, if that law had not been based on much better feelings than “luxury and disdain of the poor.” If these better feelings are maintained and cherished by such just and discriminating views of the character, and habits, and wants of the poor as are contained in Mr Bosanquet’s work, the natural result will be, that the law will be administered in a humane and kindly spirit; and in some parts of the country, it is possible that voluntary, but systematic, charity may not only assist, but to a great extent supersede and supplant it. The greatest obstacle to such im-

provements in Scotland, where the reasoning faculty is more active, and the feelings generally less easily excited, than in England, is the prevalent belief (the very opposite of Mr Bosanquet's opinion), that "the more you do for the poor, the more poor you will have;" and, therefore, that the grand object in this department of political economy is, to contrive ways and means of "throwing the poor on their own resources;" making "all sympathies give way to general principles." And it is against this doctrine,—so convenient to the selfish and uncharitable among the rich, and unfortunately countenanced by the writings of Dr Chalmers and other eminent men,—that (however diffident of my own powers of persuading others) I have taken upon me to contend, with perfect confidence in its utter fallacy and unchristian tendency.

I must here shortly notice the answer given by Dr Chalmers to my observation on his desire to have the poor provided for as much as possible by the fund *ab intra* (i.e. without any assistance from the higher ranks),—viz. that this would be making the poor support the poor. This observation, he says, "brings us to the *ne plus ultra* of reasoning"—meaning, I presume, of bad reasoning:—It denotes "a mind in which the powers of arithmetic and reflection are suspended;" and he then proceeds to explain, that he expects the poor to be relieved, not at the expense of each other, but at the expense of the pawnbrokers and whisky shopkeepers. (P. 188.)

When I said that the object seemed to be to make the poor support the poor, I meant,—and, in strictness of language, ought to have said—that the support of the poor was to fall on the *working classes*. And, at the risk of again incurring this animadversion, I must profess

myself unable to perceive whence the fund *ab intra*, on which the support of the poor is to be thrown, is derived, if it be not from the working-classes. Supposing that their expenditure on pawnbrokers and whisky-shops were diminished to the whole amount of their outlay for the relief of poverty, still, if there is to be no fund *ab extra*, it is *their* money—the produce of their labour, which is thus spent; and it is this application of their funds, exclusively, which seems to me to be neither consistent with equity nor with religious duty. Even supposing the whisky-selling and pawnbroking annihilated, and that the whole money or property which used to be spent there, is saved to the working-classes exclusively; still, if there be no other fund by which destitution is relieved, it must be they that support the poor.

If Dr Chalmers means to say, that such habits of prudence and economy as may be taught to the working classes, by the parochial system of inspection and instruction, will preserve them all from destitution, and so save *any* direct expenditure on the poor, his assertion involves two suppositions, both, as I conceive, inconsistent alike with the warnings of Scripture and with the universal experience of mankind; *first*, that, among these classes, man is to be no longer a sinful creature; and, *secondly*, that the poor are to “cease out of the land.” But if he does not mean this,—if he admits that there are still to be *poor*, *i. e.* persons dependent on charity from various causes, and among others (or rather in varied combination with others), from one kind or other of vicious indulgence,—and if the main provision for them is to be the fund *ab intra*, to the exclusion of the contributions of the higher ranks,—he cannot escape from the conclusion which I infer from his proposal, that he means to make the poor support the poor.

This is an illustration of the fallacy unfortunately prevalent in Scotland on this subject; that of confounding the means of *prevention* of destitution, with the means of *cure* or *alleviation*; and forming a very exaggerated notion of the efficacy of means of the former kind.

No one rejoices more than I do in the extension of religious and moral instruction, is more grateful for the advantages which Scotland enjoys in these respects, or more sensible that for many social evils these are the only remedies. But when it is said that in these means we are to find *a cure for pauperism*,—if it be meant that destitution and suffering, and dependence of the suffering poor on their richer brethren, are to disappear under the use of these means,—I maintain that this is supposing the whole constitution of the world to become different from what it now is, or ever has been; and from what Scripture has informed us, that it ever will be; and in fact, that the world is in a great measure to lose its character as a scene of probation, both for the rich and the poor. That a certain amount of destitution may be prevented, by these means, is indeed true; but it seems to me equally certain, that a great and continually increasing amount, as any nation advances in wealth, will always remain—proceeding from such causes as are above detailed,—partly the result of the dispensations of Providence, partly of human weakness, error, and sin, in the higher ranks, partly of the same failings in the lower;—and which is destined to be relieved only by the rich “*opening wide their hands to their poor brethren.*” From this burden and this obligation, it is unreasonable, if it be not sinful, to teach that the richer inhabitants of any Christian country can ever escape. Providence has ordained, that a part of their duty in this world is, not only to *prevent*, but to

*relieve* the sufferings of their less fortunate brethren. In the performance of that duty, as of all others, errors and abuses may often be committed, and these it is also incumbent on them to correct and avoid;—always remembering, however, that there is no abuse so great, so injurious to man, or so offensive to Heaven, as leaving the duty undone, and the sufferings unrelieved. Dr Chalmers must be aware, that in asserting that this is the case in Scotland at this moment, I am supported, not only by the testimony of many well informed observers, but by that of the General Assembly of the Church,\* and of the legal guardians of the poor in all the large towns; and after what he has himself said of the “cruel neglect and abandonment of the poor by the rich,” he cannot be surprised to find that it is the case.

I willingly submit to the imputation, in all speculations or proposals on this subject, of wishing to make provision for a *never-ending*, nay, as long as this country continues to increase in population and wealth, for a *still-increasing* pauperism; and in so doing, I humbly think I am only obeying the obvious dictates both of reason and revelation. Any one who reflects on the principle of population, as laid down by Malthus,—on the varying demand for labour in a complex state of society, where there are many manufactures,—on the precarious tenure of human life, especially in unhealthy employments, and in great towns, “where wealth accumulates and men decay,”—on the weakness of human character—and on the seeds of evil which exist in every human breast, and in all ranks of society,—must, I think, be prepared to admit (what Scripture has

\* See Pastoral Address of the General Assembly to the Church of Scotland, published July 1841, in which it is expressly said that the poor of Scotland are “too often suffering under privations greater than it could be conceived possible that a Christian country could tolerate, or that human nature could endure.”

repeatedly and emphatically declared), that the causes of destitution are *of eternal operation*; multiplying instead of diminishing as society advances; and that a great part, probably the greatest part, of the duty of man to his neighbour, will *always* consist in devising and applying means, not only for its prevention, but likewise for its relief. Then as to the best mode of performing this duty, it seems to me clear that, in this advanced stage of society, *experience* must be our chief guide; and I maintain, that the result of experience in many nations is, that the pressure of the population on the means of subsistence, and on the demand for labour, and therefore the extent of destitution, are much less in those countries where the duty of “clothing the naked and feeding the hungry,” is regulated and enforced by law, than in Scotland and other countries where the duty of charity is not so enforced. And if this be so, I cannot doubt that it must soon be perceived,—nay, I think it is already manifest from experience,—that all other objections to the efficient legal provision, on the score of injury to the character of the poor, are either unfounded, or may be obviated without difficulty by a proper regulation of the conditions under which the legal relief is granted; and farther, that religious and moral instruction may always be best and most effectually given to those of the poor, among whom the preliminary duty of charity has been most faithfully performed.

I cannot think it necessary to reply at any length to the answer which Dr Chalmers has given to my argument in favour of a more effectual legal provision for the poor in Scotland, drawn from the greater prevalence of contagious fever in the great towns in Scotland and Ireland, than in those of England. I must observe, however,

that he has fallen into the same error which I formerly pointed out in the argument of another opponent (Second Report of Association, p. 25), in his statement that, "in the exclusively medical part of the argument, professional and eminently scientific men are most widely, and as yet most hopelessly, at variance among themselves." (P. 181.) The argument itself he has put in the form of a syllogism. "All fever originates in, and is multiplied by, destitution, but destitution is lessened by a poor-rate, therefore fever would be lessened by a poor-rate." But the major proposition is inaccurately stated, for I had expressly said (Management of Poor, 2d edition, p. 10), that "I do not assert that destitution is a cause adequate to the *production* of fever;" "what we are sure of is, that it is a cause of the *rapid diffusion* of contagious fever." Therefore, the words "*originates in*," in the major proposition of the syllogism, should be left out; and when they are left out, the proposition is one on which, so far as I know, there is *no difference* among medical men. The doubt is only as to the *origin* of contagious fever; and I have expressly said that the only point of practical importance (in this discussion) is the effect of destitution on the *extension* of that disease, on which there is no doubt.

But Dr Chalmers's main answer to the syllogism is *Negatur minor*. He is not satisfied with the evidence that destitution is lessened by a poor-rate. But his argument against it is, not that the evidence is faulty,\* nor

\* He refers, indeed, to the printed statements of Dr Haldane at St Andrews, and of Mr Elliot at Peebles, in proof that I have given exaggerated accounts of the distresses of the poor in Scotland. I have read these papers attentively, and likewise the replies to them, by the Committee of Inquiry at St Andrews, and by Mr Chambers at Peebles, and which Dr Chalmers does not mention; and the conclusion to which I have come is, that while there was some inaccuracy in the original statements as to the condition of



that he has counter-evidence to produce, but only, that a physician is not entitled to give an opinion on it. "It is political economy, and that alone, which has to do with the minor proposition, and ere we give ourselves up to the authority of those new advocates for a poor-rate, we must make sure not only that they are able physicians, but sound economists." (P. 183.) He adds, indeed, that he "does not dispute the possibility" of those medical men who have urged this argument being "qualified for being as good judges and reasoners on the one subject as on the other; but that he perceives no symptoms of their having thus studied and prepared themselves in any of their writings." (P. 184.) I answer, that the minor proposition above stated relates to a matter of fact, not of judgment or reasoning; and without making any pretensions to an extensive knowledge of political economy, I may think myself sufficiently qualified—and not the less qualified for having, as a medical man, much intercourse with the poor, and having had such intercourse with them in different countries—for collecting and comparing the details by which we are to judge whether the effect of a poor-rate is to lessen destitution; or rather, whether the *relief which is certainly given in the meantime* to destitution by a poor-rate, is or is not followed by an increase of the evil. This I have endeavoured to do; and whether I have done it or not is a question, I apprehend, to be decided, not by the personal considerations which Dr

some families in these two parishes, and some inaccuracy also in the attempted refutation—and while precise accuracy in these matters is less easily attained than might be supposed—quite enough remains proved to shew, that the condition of the paupers in both places had been, and probably still is, very frequently one of such privation and suffering, as is both discreditable to the parochial authorities, and, as I believe, injurious to the habits of the lower ranks, and to the character of the country.

Chalmers here adduces, but simply by examination of the evidence.

In fact, however, the argument as to the connexion of the mode of provision for the poor with the extension of contagious fever in a community, is not fully stated in Dr Chalmers's syllogism, and being of the nature of an analytical, not a synthetical, investigation, it cannot be rightly stated in that form. We may state it thus:—Destitution appears, from previous inquiries, to favour the extension of contagious fever more remarkably than any other cause which we know: Therefore, when we see fever spreading much more in one community than another, we may suspect that there is more destitution, and inquire whether this is the cause. Now, in the British Islands, fever spreads remarkably more where there is no effectual poor-rate than when there is. We may suspect, therefore, that, in the former case, there is a greater degree of destitution, causing the difference. To ascertain this we must inquire, *first*, whether the destitution is really greater? If we find reason to believe that it is, then we must inquire, *secondly*, whether there is any other known cause, permanently acting in the one case more than in the other, adequate to explain the difference. If we cannot perceive such a cause, we must inquire, *thirdly*, whether the greater extension of the disease is at the times, or among the persons, where there is the most destitution; and if we find that, in these different ways, the destitution and the diffusion of fever are in connection, we are entitled to infer, not indeed that the destitution is the sole cause of the diffusion, but that it is one cause, acting powerfully in those districts. From which we make the practical inference, that the provision for its relief demands inquiry, and, if possible, improvement. This is

the process of induction which I have followed, and the extent of the conclusion which I have drawn ; and I humbly apprehend, that if any political economist wishes to set aside the conclusion, he must apply himself to some of the steps of the reasoning, and need not concern himself about the profession of the reasoner.

It may be expected that I should say a few words, in conclusion, on some statements lately laid before the public as to the operation of the present poor-laws both in England and Scotland, in which the representations which I and others have made in regard to both have been treated as deserving of very little credit. It is asserted, for example, that since the date of the amendment act in England, it has been found “ absolutely necessary to apply the test and constraint of a strictly regulated work-house to *all classes of paupers indiscriminately*, without almost a single exception.”\* In like manner, Dr Chalmers expresses himself (pp. 151 and 162) as if all the relief granted to any applicants in England were confined to the workhouses ; whereas I have stated, on the authority of the Poor-Law Commissioners themselves, and of those members of the House of Commons who have most zealously defended their conduct, that whatever may have been their ultimate intentions, their present practice is to allow *four-fifths of the relief* granted under the Poor-Law in England to be *out-door relief*.

To shew which is the more accurate account of this matter, I shall quote the enumeration given by Sir James Graham in the House of Commons, of the cases in which, by the regulations of the Commissioners, Guardians are at liberty to grant out-door relief :—

\* Additional Remarks on the Proposed Alteration of the Scottish Poor-Laws, &c., by D. Monypenny, Esq. of Pitmilny, p. 36.

“ 1. When such relief is required by an able-bodied man or his family, from sudden, urgent, and unavoidable distress.

“ 2. When it is required on account of sickness, accident, or bodily or mental infirmity, affecting the applicant, or any of his or her family.

“ 3. When it is required for funeral expenses.

“ 4. When it is required by a widow within six months after her widowhood, or her delivery in childbed.

“ 5. When it is required by a widow having a legitimate child or children incapable of work.

“ 6. When it is required by a family, the head of which is confined in a prison, or place of safe custody.

“ 7. When it is required by the wives or families of able-bodied men engaged in her Majesty's service, military or naval.”—(Debate of September 28. 1841.

From this it appears, that *every kind of distress* which is ever admitted to the benefits of the legal provision in Scotland is admissible, at the discretion of the Guardians, without reference to the Commissioners, to *out-door* relief in England.

Again, it is said that when I and others “descant on the poor in Scotland being thrown into situations where private charity cannot reach them,—of their misery being unknown to, and irremediable by, their superiors,—of their being obliged to beg from door to door, and of their subsistence being liable to the most distressing state of uncertainty ;”—“in all this declamation the services of deacons and elders, as well as ministers, in administering to the wants of the poor are lost sight of,—the enactments of our statutes for the very purpose of preventing the practice of begging from door to door, and of *bestowing regular and certain relief*, are forgotten, and it is held as an idle boast, that upwards of 7500 individuals engage themselves throughout Scotland in the discharge of these important and gratuitous services.” It is added, indeed, that “in the cities the proper parochial system has not as yet been generally adopted,” but that *all that is necessary* even there, is “to divide the parishes, or increase their number, to appoint

deacons, and introduce *the same system which prevails in the country parishes*, as was successfully accomplished in St John's Parish, Glasgow."\*

But I distinctly assert, that this representation as to Scotland betrays at least as great misconception of the actual state of the fact there, as the passage which I first quoted does of the present practice in England. I affirm, that the cities, to which it is admitted that the above description does not apply, contain more than half the poor in Scotland. I affirm, that the system adopted in St John's Parish in Glasgow never did give "regular and certain relief" to all the destitution there existing, but only to a part of it; and farther, that it has been abandoned there, and has not been adopted, nor is there any reasonable prospect of its being adopted, so as to give "regular and certain relief to destitution" anywhere else. I affirm that both where "the proper parochial system" exists, and where it does not, the legal relief to destitution is *most uncertain, irregular*, almost everywhere *inadequate*, and in many cases, in most parts of the country, either quite *illusory*, or absolutely *withheld*;—that the only real resource by which great numbers of the poor are preserved from starvation, is one form or other of *mendicity*; that in various parts of the country begging from door to door, instead of being prevented, is permitted, encouraged, and directed, by the parochial authorities. I affirm farther, that among the poor of Scotland, under this system of management, there is much more misery, a greater mortality, more degradation, improvidence, and vice, than in those countries where a more adequate legal provision is enforced; and that while the relief afforded to destitution is thus inadequate to

\* Additional Remarks on the Proposed Alteration of the Scottish Poor-Laws, &c., by D. Monypenny, Esq. of Pitmilly, pp. 130, 131.

its objects, it is yet a heavier burden on the industry of the country than the more effectual relief which is given elsewhere. Lastly, I affirm, that while the law of settlement and the jurisdiction of the kirk-sessions and managers of the poor remain as at present, it is impossible that these evils can be effectually or permanently corrected.

If these assertions are well founded, it is certainly true that the “enactments of our statutes *have been forgotten*,”—not by those who make these assertions, but by those whose duty it is to execute these laws;\* and *it is idle* to boast of the number of persons employed in administering this illusory relief. But if these assertions are erroneous, I shall only say, and think I have shewn, that the error is so widely diffused in Scotland, that nothing short of an official inquiry, by thoroughly informed, disinterested, and impartial men, will be sufficient to correct it, and to restore the confidence of the country in those institutions which we maintain to be so faulty.

\* Of the manner in which the duty of elders and deacons in regard to inspection of the poor is very often performed in Scotland, an idea may be formed from a resolution of a committee of the Town-Council of Aberdeen, strongly recommending, as a *great improvement on the present practice*, that these gentlemen should divide the town into districts, and engage that the paupers in each district should be regularly visited *twice in the year*, with a view to apportioning the parochial relief to their real wants. (See Report of Committee of Town Council of Aberdeen, presented 21st August 1841, p. 18.) I am not afraid of contradiction from any of those who have been practically engaged in the administration of relief to the poor in any of the destitute districts in Scotland when I say, that a body of 200 relieving officers, with moderate salaries, carefully selected, acting in subordination to the kirk-sessions, and responsible to the law, would afford an infinitely better security for the due administration, and against the misapplication, of relief to the poor, than the 7500 unpaid agents, of whose services this boast has been made.









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